National Library of Canada
Canadian Theses Service
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Service des thèses canadiennes

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

NL-339 (r. 88/04) c

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Troilus, Criseyde and Prudence

by

(C) John Herbert Morris

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1991

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-70099-8

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME: JOHN HERBERT MORRIS

TITLE OF THESIS: TROILUS, CRISEYDE AND PRUDENCE

DEGREE: MASTER OF ARTS

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1991

PERMISSION IS HEREBY GRANTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY TO REPRODUCE SINGLE COPIES OF THIS THESIS AND TO LEND OR SELL SUCH COPIES FOR PRIVATE SCHOLARLY OR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY.

THE AUTHOR RESERVES OTHER PUBLICATION RIGHTS, AND NEITHER THE THESIS NOR EXTENSIVE EXTRACTS FROM IT MAY BE PRINTED OR OTHERWISE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE AUTHOR'S WRITTEN PERMISSION.

10404 143 Street,
Edmonton, Alberta,
T5N 2S4.

Date: 3 May 1991.

from "The Pageant of Virtues," Purgatorio Canto 29.
14th century Italian MS.
Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. M676 83v (detail).

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT THEY HAVE READ, AND

RECOMMEND TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE, A THESIS

ENTITLED: Troilus, Criseyde and Prudence

SUBMITTED BY JOHN HERBERT MORRIS

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

Dr. S. Reimer

Dr. G. Burger

Dr. R. Bosley

Date: 3 May 1991.

ABSTRACT

Prudence is an important, perhaps central, concern in Geoffrey Chaucer's works. It is the theme of "The Tale of Melibee" and it plays a significant, though underestimated, role in such tales as "The Merchant's Tale" and "The Nun's Priest's Tale" in The Canterbury Tales, and in The Legend of Good Women. But it is also the central medieval ethical concern. Prudence is here studied in three ways: the first part of the paper is a short summary of the idea of prudence as it appears within the medieval tradition, especially in the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Macrobius, Martin of Braga (Pseudo-Seneca) and Thomas Aquinas. The second part examines the idea of prudence as it appears in Chaucer's minor poetry and in the Tales, especially in the "Melibee." Finally, the third part examines Troilus and Criseyde for the historical imprudence of the Trojan state and how this imprudence is reflected in the poem's three main protagonists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank, first and foremost, Dr. Stephen Reimer of the University of Alberta for his guidance and assistance while this paper was being written, and for his extraordinary patience while the ordinary vicissitudes of daily living slowed my progress. The author would like to thank Drs. Glen Burger and Richard Bosley for their helpful comments through the process of revision, and for their able and challenging questions during the examination. Not least, the author would like to give special thanks to his wife, Bonnie Bigley, who, though she knows him so well, still puts up with him. Without her loving support during the difficult months of writing this paper, it would never have come to fruition. Despite the considerable assistance of those named above, the author nonetheless selfishly claims any errors, omissions, flaws and opinions as entirely his own.

A computer was used for some research aspects of this paper. The TACT program from the University of Toronto Centre for Computing in the Humanities was used to generate concordances and to help identify word patterns. Basic text-searching and collating was done using the powerful internal programming language available in the word-processing system Nota Bene, which was also the word-processor used for this paper. Greek and runic characters were printed using the Nota Bene Special Languages Supplements. A machine-readable version of the Riverside Troilus and Criseyde was created by kind permission of the Houghton-Mifflin Company of Boston. The frontispiece is used by permission of the Pierpont Morgan Library of New York City.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 1

Chapter 1..... 7
"Prudence gooth by-fore, and ȝeveth light of counseil":
Prudence and the Rule of Princes

Chapter 2..... 41
"He that is pacient governeth hym by greet prudence":
Prudence, Melibee and Some Others

Chapter 3..... 84
"Prudence, allas, oon of thyne eyen thre me lakked alwey":
Imprudence and the Fall of Troilus and Criseyde

Conclusion..... 136

List of Works Cited..... 139

Appendix..... 145
Some Features of Rhetoric in the "Tale of Melibee"

Introduction

The apparent change of voice in the closing stanzas of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde has long represented a difficulty for modern critics. The love of Troilus and Criseyde is so disarmingly attractive that many readers are hard pressed to account for the apparent tone of moral condemnation at the end of this beautiful love tragedy. Richard Osberg conveniently summarizes Jane Adamson's "neat antithesis" that critical opinion is split between seeing the poem as "'a love-story with a moral attached' and 'a moral with a love-story attached.'"[1] This antithesis is a clear indication of just how marked a discontinuity is perceived between the poem and its ending. But is there an inscribed discontinuity between the body and the ending of the poem? Or has something been going wrong all along with Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus that modern readers no longer see? Is it possible that Troilus and Criseyde is, in fact, a moral tale enacted through a love story?

Lee Patterson has presented evidence of one medieval reader who thought that Troilus and Criseyde was fit reading for nuns and anchoresses.[2] The compiler of the Disce mori, a handbook for women religious, includes passages from the poem in his chapter on the tokens and dangers of amor carnalis, and he concludes, not by recommending

[1] Jane Adamson, "The Unity of Troilus and Criseyde," Critical Review 14 (1971): 19. Cited in Richard H. Osberg, "Between the Motion and the Act: Intentions and Ends in Chaucer's Troilus," ELH 48 (1981): 267.

[2] Patterson edits and presents an extract from the Disce mori (121-127) on the seven tokens of carnal love in "Ambiguity and Interpretation: A Fifteenth-Century Reading of Troilus and Criseyde," in his Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987) 115-53.

Troilus and Criseyde as the type of book to be avoided, but by recommending it as an exemplum of "þis sweet poison." The compiler notes that fleshly lovers "be so inebriat þat reson is clene exiled from hem," and his alternative to amor carnalis is spiritual amicitia, which he also perceives to be absent from Troilus and Criseyde.

Modern readers, too, have recognized the amor and amicitia topos in the relationship of Troilus and Pandarus in Troilus and Criseyde, but not as the motivating topos of the poem as a whole. The fact that Patterson's fifteenth-century reader did recognize it leads Patterson to some more general and theoretical conclusions on the historical understanding of interpretation. Patterson describes the compiler's procedure as "an exercise in literary identification: he surveys the available topoi and aligns the matching pair."[3] Patterson calls the procedure "characteristically medieval," and he argues that,

> as a final implication, we might even be led to argue that late-medieval literary creation operates, deliberately and even enthusiastically, at the level of form, and that the poet understands his immediate task as being to dispose and vary a range of inherited tropes. Chaucerian writing, in other words, is always a rewriting; and so must our reading be a rereading.[4]

This conclusion is, as Patterson admits, a currently unfashionable means of interpreting medieval literature. Earlier in our century, the matching convention for interpreting Troilus and Criseyde was the courtly romance. But the discontinuity that readers perceived between the body of the poem and its ending led many to seek other means and methods of interpretation for disambiguating the poem, or else led them to accept

[3] Patterson 150.

[4] Patterson 150.

implicitly the New Critical response which allows ambiguity to stand as ineluctably and irresolvably inscribed in the poem.

One implication of the New Critical response and its heirs, especially when applied to medieval literature, is that both the medieval reader and writer could be moral relativists. If the text is irresolvably and deliberately ambiguous, then any moral meaning to which the reader might be directed could very well also be irresolvably ambiguous. Without positing a cultural monolith called "the Middle Ages," we must still suggest that we would be looking at a rare medieval reader or writer, indeed, who would consider moral ambiguity an acceptable posture. We must go further and suggest that, if we find ambiguities within a medieval text, they are there either as a result of our own habits of reading or because the author expects us to disambiguate the text for ourselves. As moderns, we might resolve the narrator's own ambiguous responses towards his protagonists in Troilus and Criseyde, but we might also still believe that the love of Troilus and Criseyde is properly attractive; unlike the "truly pious reader" in the Middle Ages (Patterson's phrase), we interpret, but we are not armed with the correct topos which will make us securely immune to the sweet attractions of amor. But, judging from the vast array of critical responses to Troilus and Criseyde, it is evident that the poem is not such a one-dimensional work that it can be reduced to interpretation through a single topos. We must wonder if the amor and amicitia topos is the only topos in the poem, or whether there is another topical level which might contain and even explicate amor and amicitia.

In the conclusion to the commentary on the seven tokens of carnal love, the compiler of the Disce mori refers to the lovers who, as quoted

above, "be so inebriat þat reson is clene exiled from hem." Modern readers may well wonder what is so significant about lovers being unreasonable and may even balk at the notion that they should be reasonable. Most medieval moral commentators accept the passions as an ineluctable fact: no amount of reason is going to do away with them. Some, like Thomas Aquinas, even go so far as to say that the passions, or, more properly, the appetites, are good and useful things, but that there is a difference between ordinate and inordinate appetites. Inordinate appetite is appetite which exists for no other purpose than its own satisfaction. Eating, for instance, which is good and necessary for the continuance of life itself, becomes gluttony in the moment that its purpose becomes singly and solely gratification of the sheer desire for eating. The accumulation of riches, which is good and necessary for maintaining the magnificence appropriate to the estate in which God has placed us, becomes avarice when the object of accumulating riches is the accumulating of riches.

The governor of appetites is right reason, and it is right insofar as it keeps the appetites ordinate. Reason can also be directed to the means for satisfying inordinate appetites, but it is not then called right reason, but false reason. Reason is perfected by virtue, and virtue, in the very practical affairs of ordering the appetites, has four basic species. Prudence is the virtue which puts reason itself in order and which is directed towards the right actions that should be taken in a given circumstance. Justice is the virtue which directs reason to order something outside itself and which determines whether actions are equitable. Temperance and fortitude are the virtues which order the appetites directly. Moral virtue is about not only knowing

about right conduct, but also about taking right actions. Typically, then, prudence is the virtue which governs all the others. These four virtues, taken together, are known as the four cardinal virtues. If lovers are unreasonable, it is reasonable to suppose that their failure of reason manifests itself as the failure of one or more of these virtues.

This paper makes just such a supposition, and it represents an experiment in method to see if Troilus and Criseyde can be interpreted profitably under the topos of the four cardinal virtues in part, but particularly under the topos of prudence since it directs and rectifies the other virtues. An adequate description of the virtue of prudence could easily make for a full dissertation, and a thorough discussion of all four virtues would require four such dissertations. Because the topos is so little known nowadays, the first part of this paper sketches the general outline of the medieval discussion of the virtue of prudence. Prudence, as it was understood in the later Middle Ages, was ultimately Aristotelian in derivation, but its form was Ciceronian. Interestingly, the Ciceronian form was not only preserved in the iconography of the virtue, but the literary expressions of the virtue attempted to preserve the iconography. The effort to preserve the Ciceronian form while accommodating the complex manifestations of the virtue named by Macrobius will be particularly evident in Thomas Aquinas's discussion of prudence.

The second part of this paper will discuss the use of the topos in Chaucer's other works, but especially in his tale of "Melibee." It is a basic assumption of the second part that the "Melibee" is not, as a great many critics believe, a long and boring joke. The "Melibee" is a

serious study of the virtue of prudence as it is manifested in the related virtue of "good counsel." As such, it is part of a long tradition of such discussions that reaches back at least to Aristotle, and it is consistent in every detail with similar discussions in the tradition. In addition, some samples are taken from Chaucer's other Canterbury Tales where prudence and good counsel are notably lacking.

The final part of this paper deals with the topos of prudence as it is manifested in Troilus and Criseyde. When compared with the dictates of prudence, the actions of the three main protagonists are remarkable for their imprudence, and it is suggestive that their actions are undertaken in a city famous for perennially undertaking the most imprudent actions. The final assumption of this paper is that Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus, despite Troilus's protestations to the contrary, are not predestined or fated or the victims of Fortune, but are possessed of the freedom of will to act morally, and that they are fully capable of acting morally.

I

"Prudence gooth by-fore, and ȝeveth light of counseil": Prudence and the Rule of Princes

In Book V of Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer shows us a curiously vivid and bizarre image. Criseyde is in the Greek camp agonizing over her proposed return to Troilus when she says

> Prudence, allas, oon of thyne eyen thre
> Me lakked alwey, er that I come here!
> On tyme ypassed wel remembred me,
> And present tyme ek koud ich wel ise,
> But future tyme, er I was in the snare,
> Koude I nat sen; that causeth now my care.[1]

This strange, even surreal, image poses as many questions as it answers. We wonder who Prudence is, why she needs three eyes, why the eyes look to the past, present and future, and why Criseyde, at a moment of extreme crisis, is suddenly concerned that she has only two eyes.

Although it is a truism to say that the significations of words change over time, it is important to this study that we understand the general shift in meaning of the term "prudence" since the Middle Ages.[2] Prudence is no longer generally understood to include serene nobility of mind, courage or justice, and the idea that prudence involves foresight

[1] Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, ed. Stephen A. Barney, The Riverside Chaucer, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) 5.744-749. All references to Chaucer's works are to the Riverside edition.

[2] It is rather more than a truism for Chaucer:

> Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
> Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
> That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
> Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so. (2.22-25)

has long since fallen into disuse.[3] As Josef Pieper puts it in his study, The Four Cardinal Virtues, nowadays "prudence always carries the connotation of timorous, small-minded self-preservation, of a rather selfish concern about oneself."[4] Pieper overstates the case, of course, but it is true that prudence does carry a strong connotation of a cautious reticence about taking action. But, as a term in ethical philosophy, prudence was regarded, for nearly two thousand years in the western philosophical tradition, as the "mother" of the cardinal virtues, and it was thought that, without the "practical wisdom" that constituted prudence, one could not be tranquil in spirit, just, or courageous. Nor could one be good without being prudent: without thoughtful consideration for consequences, no action could be good even if good consequences followed from it.

Given the difference between the meaning of prudence in the modern era and in the Middle Ages, any discussion of the role of prudence, and particularly of the role of prudence in Geoffrey Chaucer's Troilus and Crisyede, must begin with a definition of terms. The discussion will be novel only to modern ears: the concepts surrounding the virtue of prudence were among the commonplaces of medieval thought. The terms of the discussion were ancient, and there was nothing at all extraordinary in the integral relationship of prudence and the other cardinal virtues. Josef Pieper reminds us that Agathon, in his speech on Love in the

[3] The second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary records no use of "prudence" meaning "foresight" after 1685.

[4] Josef Pieper, The Four Cardinal Virtues (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1966) 4.

Symposium, "organizes his ideas around the four cardinal virtues."[5] Agathon, in Plato's account, concludes on the virtues of Love with

> περὶ μὲν οὖν δικαιοσύνης καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ ἀνδρείας τοῦ θεοῦ εἴρηται, περὶ δὲ σοφίας λείπεται· ὅσον οὖν δυνατόν, πειρατέον ἐλλείπειν.[6]

Agathon's playful contribution to the discussion in the Symposium is about the character of the God of Love, not a discussion of virtue, but he shows us that this approach to organizing the virtues was already a habit of mind by the time Plato was writing. But Aristotle was the first great commentator on the virtue of prudence, and all subsequent discussions of the virtue are influenced by his definition.

Aristotle undertakes his examination of prudence and its relations to other mental faculties in the sixth book of the Nicomachean Ethics, and he begins by indicating that prudence is an intellectual virtue rather than a moral virtue. Pierre Payer notes that prudence was seen both by Aristotle and by the earlier writers of the Middle Ages as a kind of knowledge. Earlier medieval writers concluded that, since knowledge is possessed by both good and evil alike, knowledge itself must be morally neutral.[7] Prudence could not, therefore, be considered

[5] Pieper xi.

[6] Plato, Symposium, Opera, ed. Ioannes Burnet, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1910), 196e. "Of his courage and temperance and justice I have spoken, but I have yet to speak of his wisdom; and according to the measure of my ability I must try to do my best" [Plato, Symposium, The Dialogues of Plato, trans B. Jowett, vol. 2 (London: Oxford UP, 1892) 566]. These are not precisely the four cardinal virtues even though prudence may be defined as "practical wisdom" (Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 6.5). But Agathon is asserting the right of poetry to stand alongside philosophy, and he is deliberately less than rigorous in his use of philosophical categories throughout his portion of the dialogue.

[7] Pierre J. Payer. "Prudence and the Principles of Natural Law: A Medieval Development," Speculum 54 (1979): 57.

a moral virtue. But Aristotle concludes that prudence is a moral as well as an intellectual virtue, and, as the complete text of the Ethics became available in the twelfth century, writers began to elevate the status of prudence to the particular kind of moral knowledge which could distinguish between good and evil. Indeed, it was not until comparatively late in the Christian era, in a development culminating with Thomas Aquinas, that prudence and the other cardinal virtues were ranked as virtues essential to both spiritual and moral well-being.[8]

Aristotle includes prudence (φρόνησις) among five modes of thought which lead to truth. Prudence is distinguished from science (ἐπιστέμη), art (τέχνη), intelligence (or intuition, νοῦς) and wisdom (σοφία), and it is defined as practical wisdom.[9] Prudence may be defined by the character of the prudent man, he says;

> δοκεῖ δὴ φρονίμον εἶναι τὸ δύνασθαι καλῶς βουλεύσασθαι περὶ τὰ αὑτῷ, ἀγαθὰ καὶ συμφέροντα, οὐ κατὰ μέρος, οἷον ποῖα πρὸς ὑγίειαν ἢ πρὸς ἰσχύν, ἀλλὰ ποῖα πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως.[10]

Those who are prudent calculate for some serious and higher end "ὥστε καὶ ὅλως ἂν εἴη φρόνιμος ὁ βουλεντικός."[11]

[8] Payer 57.

[9] Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, trans. H. Rackam, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1963) 6.5.

[10] Ethics 6.5.1. "Now it is held to be the mark of a prudent man to be able to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for himself, not in some one department, for instance what is good for health and strength, but what is advantageous as a means to the good life in general." [All translations of The Nicomachean Ethics are from H. Rackham's Loeb edition].

[11] Ethics 6.5.2. "so that the prudent man in general will be the man who is good at deliberating in general."

But before considering the nature of deliberation (εὐβουλία), which was better known in the Middle Ages as "good counsel," Aristotle considers the other intellectual virtues. Science consists of first principles, which are invariable. Because there is no deliberation about what is invariable, he says, prudence is not science. Prudence is not art because art aims at an end other than itself, that is, the production of an artifact, whereas prudence aims only at doing well. A deliberate error in art is often praised, but an error in prudence is not. Prudence is not wisdom, because the wise are often imprudent, that is, unconscious of their own good. Wisdom is, moreover, an understanding of what follows from first principles, not practice in their application. Prudence is not intelligence, because intelligence is the state of mind which apprehends first principles. Prudence can apply first principles, but it cannot deliberate about them:

> ἡ δὲ φρόνησις περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα, καὶ περὶ ὧν ἔστι βουλεύσασθαι. τοῦ γὰρ φρονίμου μάλιστα τοῦτ' ἔργον εἶναι φαμεν, τὸ εὖ βουλεύεσθαι· βουλεύεται δ' οὐθεὶς περὶ τῶν ἀδυνάτων ἄλλως ἔχειν, οὐδ' ὅσων μὴ τέλος τί ἐστι, καὶ τοῦτο πρακτὸν ἀγαθόν.[12]

Prudence is, therefore, concerned with judgments about what is variable in life, what can be deliberated about, and what are practical, good ends.

Aristotle begins the positive part of his definition of prudence by considering the nature of deliberation. Deliberation itself is not

[12] Ethics 6.7.6. "Prudence on the other hand is concerned with the affairs of men, and with things that can be the object of deliberation. For we say that to deliberate well is the most characteristic function of the prudent man; but no one deliberates about things that cannot vary nor yet about variable things that are not means to some end, and that end a good attainable by action."

opinion or knowledge since no one, again, deliberates about what is known. Deliberation is not a species of conjecture (εὐστοχία), because conjecture is independent of reasoning. Conjecture is also rapid, and it is an important feature of deliberation that it is carried out slowly and acted upon quickly. Deliberation is a species of correctness:

> ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ὁ μὲν κακῶς βουλευόμενος ἁμαρτάνει, ὁ δ' εὖ ὀρθῶς βουλεύεται, δῆλον ὅτι ὀρθότης τις ἡ εὐβουλία ἐστιν, οὔτ' ἐπιστήμης δὲ οὔτε δόξης.[13]

Aristotle is careful to distinguish the kind of correctness in question:

> ὁ γὰρ ἀκρατὴς καὶ ὁ φαῦλος ὃ προτίθεται δεῖν ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ τεύξεται, ὥστε ὀρθῶς ἔσται βεβουλευμένος, κακὸν δὲ μέγα εἰληφώς· δοκεῖ δ' ἀγαθόν τι εἶναι τὸ εὖ βεβουλεῦσθαι. ἡ ἄρα τοιαύτη ὀρθότης βουλῆς εὐβουλία, ἡ ἀγαθοῦ τευκτική.[14]

Good ends may sometimes be achieved accidentally through bad deliberation, but to be prudent, one must deliberate with timeliness, by the correct means, and to a good end.

Besides deliberation, prudence requires experience. Knowledge of particulars comes only with time, and the young are rarely thought to be prudent, since they have not had the time to gain experience:

> ὥστε δεῖ προσέχειν τῶν ἐμπείρων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων ἢ φρονίμων ταῖς ἀναποδείκτοις φάσεσι καὶ δόξαις οὐχ

[13] Ethics 6.9.3. "But inasmuch as a bad deliberator makes mistakes and a good deliberator deliberates correctly, it is clear that Deliberative Excellence is a species of correctness; though it is not correctness of Knowledge or Opinion."

[14] Ethics 6.9.4. "A man of deficient self-restraint or a bad man may as a result of calculation arrive at the object he proposes as the right thing to do, so that he will have deliberated correctly, although he will have gained something evil; whereas to have deliberated well is felt to be a good thing, namely being correct in the sense of arriving at something good."

ἧττον τῶν ἀποδείξεων· διὰ γὰρ τὸ ἔχειν ἐκ τῆς ἐμπειρίας ὄμμα ὁρῶσιν ὀρθῶς.[15]

The young, he says, are capable of wisdom about abstract things, like mathematics, but rarely capable of prudence in practical matters.

Having taken pains to distinguish the various intellectual parts of the soul, Aristotle is at equal pains to explain that the soul is single and whole, and its parts are only generally distinguishable. Judgment, understanding, prudence and intelligence are simply different aspects of the soul concerned with different aspects of the same thing: right and equitable acts. Prudence is distinguished from the other faculties of the mind because it has an imperative force: it directs one to correct action.

Aristotle continues by examining the value of both wisdom and prudence. Wisdom is not concerned with the activity of life and, therefore, should not be able to lead through action to happiness. Prudence is concerned with the active life, but the good acts which it dictates are already practised by the good man. If prudence is only a state of character, it allows us to <u>know</u> the good, but it does not make us capable of <u>doing</u> good. The purpose of prudence is to help us become good, but it is of no use to those who are already good because it cannot lead them to be good. Prudence is also useless to the wicked since

[15] <u>Ethics</u> 6.11.6. "Consequently the unproved assertions of experienced and elderly people, or of prudent men, are as much deserving of attention as those which they support by proof; for experience has given them an eye for things, and so they see correctly." Rackam, the Loeb editor, notes that the parenthesis, "or of prudent men" is considered a suspicious addition since "no one can become prudent merely by getting old." One presumes, however, that the elderly persons meant by Aristotle have shown themselves capable of offering proofs when needed, that is, have shown themselves not to be fools.

it makes no difference to their wickedness if they follow prudence or the advice of the prudent. Aristotle here allows that his premises may be inadequate. He begins with the new premise that wisdom is part of virtue, and that the possession of virtue itself is a good that leads to happiness. The full realization of the humanity of the individual comes from the combination of virtue and prudence because virtue determines the correct and good end of life, and prudence determines the means to that end.

Acting prudently is a matter of choosing to act prudently. Aristotle asserts that the wicked may achieve their desired ends but that the faculty they choose to exercise in attaining their ends should be called cleverness (δεινότης) rather than prudence. Cleverness resembles prudence in that it dictates the actions necessary to achieving ends, but prudence represents a kind of right reasoning, and cleverness a kind of false reasoning. Put another way, cleverness provides us with the choice of actions, but virtue makes those choices correct and, therefore, prudent. The good man, further, can see the virtuous end, but "διαστρέφει γὰρ ἡ μοχτηρία καὶ διαψεύδεσθαι ποιεῖ περὶ τὰς πρακτικὰς ἀρχάς," and Aristotle concludes that "ὥστε φανερὸν ὅτι ἀδύνατον φρόνιμον εἶναι μὴ ὄντα ἀγαθόν."[16]

Aristotle asserts that if we have certain virtues such as justice, temperance and courage, they are naturally endowed within us at birth; they represent an instinct for virtue. But if natural virtues are not informed by right reason, he cautions, they are apt to become vicious,

[16] Ethics 6.12.10. "Vice perverts the mind and causes it to hold false views about the first principles of conduct." "Hence it is clear that we cannot be prudent without being good."

perhaps as when Cicero says courage turns to viciousness when it becomes temerity rather than its opposite, cowardice.[17] Virtues become moral when they are endowed with intelligence and an understanding of good ends, and prudence thus becomes not only a moral virtue, but the highest of the virtues in the sense that it governs all correct and virtuous action. All moral virtues imply prudence, and Aristotle extends his conclusion to say,

> δῆλον οὖν ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ὅτι οὐχ οἷόν τε ἀγαθὸν εἶναι κυρίως ἄνευ φρονήσεως, οὐδὲ φρόνιμον ἄνευ τῆς ἠθικῆς ἀρετῆς.[18]

The moral primacy of prudence in the realm of practical action is thus established, and it is an idea which has a currency through the ensuing centuries. The longevity of the idea will be a sign not that it is mere cant, but rather a sign of its vitality in innumerable contexts.

In the Middle Ages, the discussion of prudence reaches it most rigorous and sophisticated form at the hands of Thomas Aquinas, who was very much influenced by Aristotle in his ideas about prudence. Thomas discusses eight parts, or attributes, of prudence, and he begins by answering the objection that the differing numbers of parts described by previous writers suggest a deficiency or excess in one or the other description.[19] Thomas lists the parts described by his predecessors, whom

[17] Marcus Tullius Cicero, Rhetorici Libri Dvo Qui Vocantvr De Inventione, ed. E. Stroebel (Stuttgart: Teubneri, 1965) 2.54.165.

[18] Ethics 6.13.6. "These considerations therefore show that it is not possible to be good in the true sense of the word without Prudence, nor to be prudent without Moral Virtue."

[19] Rosemund Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966) 69-70. Tuve cautions against seeing the "parts" of virtues as separate elements which make up a whole virtue. The parts are, rather, forms or manifestations of a virtue.

he names as Aristotle, Andronicus, Macrobius and Cicero, but he argues that related parts can be grouped into the three main parts described by Cicero:

> Tullius enim, in II Rhet., ponit tres partes prudentiae: scilicet memoriam, intelligentiam et providentiam. —Macrobius autem, secundam sententiam Plotini, attribuit prudentias sex: scilicet rationem, intellectum, circumspectionem, providentiam, docilitatem et cautionem.—Aristoteles autem, in VI Ethic., dicit ad prudentiam eubuliam, synesim et gnomen. Facit etiam mentionem prudentiam eustochia et solertia, sensu et intellectu. Quidam autem alius philosophus graecus [Andronicus] dicit quod ad prudentiam decem pertinent: scilicet eubulia, solertia, providentia, regnativa, militaris, politica, oeconomica, dialectica, rhetorica, physica.[20]

The differences of number between various descriptions are the result of different ways of subdividing the parts.[21] Thomas further assigns the parts of prudence to those parts which are integral parts, subjective parts and potential parts:

> Triplex est pars: scilicet integralis, ut paries, tectum et fundamentum sunt partes domus; subiectiva, sicut bos et leo

[20] Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, ed. Petri Caramello, vol. 2 (Rome: Marietti, 1952) 2-2.Q48.A1. "Cicero, in the second book of his Rhetoric, sets three parts of prudence: memory, intelligence and foresight.—Macrobius, moreover, following the sentence of Plotinus attributes six parts to prudence: reason, intelligence, circumspection, foresight, willingness to learn, and caution.—Aristotle, in the sixth book of his Ethics, says to prudence go deliberation, judgment and understanding, and also conjecture and shrewdness, perceiving and discernment. Another Greek philosopher says that ten parts pertain to prudence: deliberation, shrewdness, foresight, regnative, military, political, economic, dialectic, rhetoric, and physics." As we shall see below, Cicero's three parts, corresponding to the past, present and future, delineate the commonest expression of the form of prudence in the Middle Ages. Thomas is extremely concerned with preserving this structure as the foundation of his discussion. [All translations from Latin sources are my own].

[21] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q48.A1.

> sunt partes animales; et potentialis, sicut nutritivum et sensitivum sunt partes animae.[22]

After reviewing the parts ascribed to prudence by Cicero, Macrobius, Aristotle and Andronicus, Thomas accepts the six parts described by Macrobius, and he adds to these memoriam from Cicero, and eustochia (εὐστοχία)[23] from Aristotle, to create a list of eight parts he considers pars integralis of prudence.[24] Five parts are ascribed to prudence as a cognitive virtue, and the other three to the application of knowledge to action:

> Quorum octo quinque pertinent ad prudentiam secundum id quod est cognoscitiva, scilicet memoria, ratio, intellectus, docilitas et solertia: tria vero alia pertinent ad eam secundum quod est praeceptiva, applicando cognitionem ad opus, scilicet providentia, circumspectio et cautio.[25]

The difference between the two types of knowledge is the difference between knowing and doing, and these eight parts can be redistributed according to the more traditional Ciceronian temporal relations. Knowledge by itself, if it refers to the past, is called memory, and if to the present, is called discernment or intelligence. The acquisition of

[22] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q48. "There are three kinds of parts: obviously integral, as wall, roof and foundation are parts of a building; subjective, just as bull and lion are parts of animal; and potential, just as the nutritive and sensitive are parts of the soul."

[23] "Shrewdness" or "conjecture." In Latin, solertia.

[24] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q48. Thomas is aware that Aristotle denies the connection between deliberation and conjecture, but he can also see no reason why conjecture should not come under prudence through the faculty of understanding.

[25] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q48. "Of these eight, five pertain to prudence by that which is cognitive, obviously memory, reason, discernment, willingness to learn, and conjecture: three pertain to it by that which is directive, by applying knowledge to action, obviously foresight, circumspection and caution."

knowledge comes through willingness to learn or by happy conjecture, and the use of knowledge comes through reasoning. Reason, if it is to be rightly directive, requires three conditions:

> Primo quidem, ut ordinet aliquid accommodum ad finem: et hoc pertinet ad providentiam. Secundo, ut attendat circumstantias negotii: quod pertinet ad circumspectionem. Tertio, ut vitet impedimenta: quod pertinet ad cautionem.[26]

But besides these parts which are integral to prudence as a virtue, Thomas divides prudence into four subjective parts according to the social relationship in which prudence is exercised.

Prudence is not only in individuals for their own good, but, in its subjective parts, it is also a profoundly social virtue. Thomas argues that the individual stands in several relations to society and must act prudently according to the particular relationship. A prince must exercise regnative prudence; his subject, political prudence; the householder, domestic prudence; and the soldier, military prudence. Following Aristotle's notion that prudence is directed towards the good life, each species of prudence contributes to the common good. Political prudence involves the obligation not only of the subject to the king, but also of the subject to other subjects:

> Per prudentiam communiter dictam regit homo seipsum in ordine ad proprium bonum: per politicam autem de qua loquimur, in ordine ad bonum commune.[27]

[26] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q48. "First certainly, so that it orders things to accommodating the end: and this pertains to providence. Secondly, so that it attends to the circumstances of the affair at hand: which pertains to circumspection. Thirdly, so that it avoids impediments: which pertains to caution."

[27] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q50.2. "By prudence, as it is commonly called, a man directs himself according to his own good: by political [prudence], however, according to the common good."

The king's obligation is to the good governance of his people, and the principal means of fulfilling this obligation is to mete out justice properly. But he can only dispense justice with help:

> Executio iustitiae, prout ordinatur ad bonum commune, quae pertinet ad officium regis, indiget directione prudentiae.[28]

The soldier's principal object is obviously in the defence of his king and the king's subjects. But soldiering is not merely an art which is only directed to an external end:

> Militaris potest esse ars secundum quod habet quasdam regulas recte utendi quibusdam exterioribus rebus, puta armis et equis: sed secundum quod ordinatur ad bonum commune habet magis rationem prudentiae.[29]

In each important social role—as householder, subject, soldier and king—each individual has an obligation to consider the consequences of action with respect to the common good.

Thomas's discussion of the parts of prudence, which he calls "potential," are related very closely to the acquisition of prudence which will be dealt with below. But the more general discussion of the virtue in the Middle Ages centres around the three parts described by Cicero—memoria, intelligentia and providentia—and their relations to the temporal framework of past, present and future.

Cicero, in a deliberate development of Aristotle's ideas, discusses prudence in De Inventione, but his concerns are different from

[28] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q50.1. "The execution of justice, inasmuch as it is ordered to the common good (which pertains to the duties of the king), needs the direction of prudence."

[29] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q50.4. "Soldiering can be an art according to whether it has certain rules for the proper use of external things, such as arms and horses: but, as it is ordered to the common good, it belongs more to prudence."

Aristotle's. Unlike Aristotle, who writes of virtue as such, Cicero is concerned particularly with the virtue of the orator, especially the practitioner of deliberative oratory. Cicero does not agree with Aristotle that utility is the sole valid end of deliberative oratory. Instead, he prefers both utility and morality:

> Nam placet in iudicali genere finem esse aequitatem, hoc est partem quandam honestatis. In deliberativo autem Aristoteli placet utilitatem, nobis et honestatem et utilitatem.[30]

Three kinds of things should be sought in deliberative oratory, and they are morality, usefulness, and a combination of both. Things which are intrinsically valuable, but which do not offer any material advantages, belong strictly to morality:

> Nam est quiddam, quod sua vi nos adliciat ad sese, non emolumento captans aliquo, sed trahens sua dignitate, quod genus virtus, scientia, veritas.[31]

On the other hand, some things are sought strictly for their profitability or utility while some other things are sought mainly for their merit and only partly for their advantages. These latter include friendship and good reputation:

> Est porro quiddam ex horum partibus iunctum, quod et sua vi et dignitate nos inlectos ducit et prae se quandam gerit utilitatem, quo magis expetatur, ut amicitia, bona existimatio.[32]

[30] De invent. 2.51.156. "For it is generally agreed that in the judicial the end is equity, that is, part of the greater morality. In the deliberative, however, Aristotle agrees to utility, but we ourselves to both morality and utility."

[31] De Invent. 2.52.157. "For there is something which attracts us to itself by its own force, not charming us to gain from it, but drawing us to itself by its own merit, which class [of things includes] virtue, knowledge, truth."

[32] De invent. 2.52.157. "There is, further, something which has been joined from these parts [morality and utility], which entices us by both its own power and merit, and which offers a utility which is the more eagerly sought, such as friendship and good reputation."

The moral and the honourable include things that are both useful and purely moral, and all such things are contained within virtue. Cicero argues that the full scope of virtue is expressed in these four parts, known in the Middle Ages as the cardinal virtues: prudentiam, iustitiam, fortitudinem, temperantiam.[33]

Cicero's definition of prudence is of particular interest, and its three attributes are described throughout the Middle Ages in much this same form:

> Prudentia est rerum bonarum et malarum neutrarumque scientia. Partes eius: memoria, intelligentia, providentia. Memoria est, per quam animus repetit illa, quae fuerunt; intelligentia, per quam ea perspicit, quae sunt; providentia, per quam futurum aliquid videtur ante quam factum est.[34]

Aristotle implied this structure when he described the roles of experience and deliberation in choosing the correct course of action: Cicero has formalized the structure and made it explicit.

The tripartite structure of prudence described by Cicero is also found in the Liber sapientiae in the Vulgate version of the Bible. The author refers to the four cardinal virtues generally, and particularly to prudence, when he recommends that

> si multam peritiam desiderat quis, scit praeterita et futura coniecit, novit versutias sermonum et solutiones aenigmatum,

[33] De Invent. 2.53.159.

[34] De Invent. 2.53.160. "Prudence is the knowledge of what is good and evil and neither [good nor evil]. Its parts: memory, understanding, forethought. Memory is the spirit which recalls those things which have been; understanding, that which examines what is; forethought, by which the particular future is seen before it is done."

> signa et monstra scit, antequam fiant, et eventus momentorum et temporum.[35]

The Liber sapientiae is unique in the Vulgate for its use of Hellenistic technical terminology in its discussion of virtue, and it was probably written in Alexandria around the time of Cicero.[36] Nevertheless, it gave a scriptural authority to a classical construction that was later to be exploited in Christian ethical philosophy.

The tripartite structure of prudence is established in the Christian Middle Ages by the end of the fourth century. In De Officiis Ministrorum, for example, Ambrose advises clerics to seek the counsel of the just and prudent:

> Quod si eum inveneris qui vivacitate ingenii, mentis vigore atque præstet, et accedat eo ut exemplo et usu paratior sit, præsentia solvat pericula, prospiciat futura, denuntiet imminentia, argumentum expediat, remedium in ferat tempore, paratus sit non solum ad consulendum, sed etiam ad subveniendum; huic ita fides habetur.[37]

Macrobius, a near contemporary, is less concerned with the temporal structure of prudence than with the component virtues of prudence. In

[35] Liber sapientiae, Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979) 8.8. "If someone likes much experience, he knows the past, and he infers the future; he has discerned the subtleties of discourse and the unbinding of allegories; he knows the signs and portents and the result of changes and of seasons before they are done."

[36] James M. Reese, "Wisdom of Solomon," Harper's Bible Commentary, gen. ed. James L. Mays (San Francisco: Harper, 1988) 820-821.

[37] Ambrose, De Officiis Ministrorum, Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi: Opera Omnia, Patrologiae Latinae 16 (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, n.d.) 2.8.42. "But if you have found one who excels by the liveliness of his temperament, by the vigor of his mind, and it happens with him that he is better prepared by example and by use; removes present dangers, provides for future [dangers], announces those impending, explains an argument, brings relief in time, is prepared not only to give counsel, but also to give relief; faith is kept in just such a man."

the Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis, the parts of prudence are ratio, intellectus, circumspectio, providentia, docilitas, and cautio.[38] But in the Saturnalia, a work less well known in the Middle Ages, Macrobius describes certain features in the temple of Serapis as a metaphor of time which is identical to the temporal frame of the three parts of prudence.

Serapis was an Egyptian god variously and anciently associated with Apollo or Pluto.[39] In the temple, Serapis's hand rests on the head of a three-faced monster. The faces are of a lion, a dog, and a wolf. Macrobius explains:

> Leonis capite monstratur praesens tempus, quia condicio eius inter praeteritum futurumque actu praesenti valida fervensque est. Sed et praeteritum tempus lupi capite signatur, quod memoria rerum transactarum rapitur et aufertur. Item canis blandientis effigies futuri temporis designat eventum, de quo nobis spes, licet incerta, blanditur.[40]

The image is not of prudence, of course, but of its reverse aspect: time as rapacious and devouring, destroying life and memory, and deceiving us with hope of the future. The suggestion of placing one's hopes in fortune (eventum) emphasizes the mirror opposition to prudence, and the

[38] Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis, ed. Iacobus Willis (Leipzig: Bibliothecae Teuberniae, 1953) 1.8.7. Reason, perception, circumspection, foresight, willingness to learn and caution.

[39] Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in The Renaissance, 2nd ed. (London: Faber, 1967) 259.

[40] Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, Saturnalia, ed. Iacobus Willis (Leipzig: Bibliothecae Teuberniae, 1953) 1.20.14-15. "The present time is indicated by the lion's head, because its condition between past and future is vigorous and furious in the present impulse. But past time is designated by the head of the wolf, because the memory of completed things is snatched and carried off. Likewise, the semblance of the flatterer dog indicates the fortune of future time, because hope, doubtfully valued, entices us."

very animality of the image is devoid of the controlling reason so essential to prudence. Even if the image is not a parody of prudence, it preserves the common temporal structure, and demonstrates Macrobius's awareness of it. But more importantly, as Edgar Wind notes,

> by the time [Cesare] Ripa published his Iconologia (1593), the mysterious attribute of Serapis had been refined to a moral hieroglyph. Still associated with the three parts of time, it now signified that particular virtue which Aristotle called εὐβουλία.[41]

Wind makes a broader distinction between prudence and εὐβουλία than is really necessary, but Jean Seznec also notes that the Franciscan John Ridewall, in his Fulgentius Metaforalis, associates Pluto-Serapis with providencia in the Ciceronian parts of prudence, memoria, intelligentia and providencia.[42] As savage as the image in Serapis's temple may be, it still associates, through the medieval moral recuperation of the pagan, with an image of prudence.

The idea of the three parts of prudence becomes firmly ensconced in Christian ethical philosophy so that, by the late sixth century, when Martin of Braga was asked to provide King Miro of the Sueves with a short guide to virtuous conduct, he dealt exclusively with the four cardinal virtues. The resulting handbook, Formula Honestæ Vitæ, was probably written shortly after Miro's accession in 570.[43] In his counsel to Miro, he says,

[41] Wind 259.

[42] Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art, trans. Barbara F. Sessions, Bollingen Series 38 (New York: Pantheon, 1953) 94.

[43] Claude W. Barlow, Introduction, The Rules for an Honest Life, by Martin of Braga, trans. Claude W. Barlow, The Fathers of the Church: Iberian Fathers (Washington: Catholic U of America P, 1962) 11.

> Si prudens esse cupis, in futurum, prospectum intende; et quæ possunt contingere, animo tuo cuncta propone. Cuiuscunque facti causum require: cum initia inveneris, exitus cogitabus. . . . Si prudens est animus tuus, tribus temporibus dispensetur. Praesentia ordina, futura prævide, præterita recordare. Nam qui nil de præterito cogitat, perdit vitam, qui nil de futuro præmeditur, in omnia incautus incidit.[44]

The formulation is evidently common property in the Middle Ages, appearing, further, in the works of Dante, Boccaccio, Lydgate, and Hoccleve, to name only a few.[45] In Dante's allegory of the three theological and

[44] Martin of Braga (St. Martini Dumiensis), Formula Honestae Vitae, Patrologiae Latinae 72 (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, n.d.) 23. "If you wish to be prudent gaze into the future, and set before your mind all which can concern you. Seek again the cause of whatever deeds: you will find that with the beginning, you will consider the outcome. . . . If your mind is prudent, manage things according to three times. Set in order the present, foresee the future, remember the past. For whoever does not consider the past, destroys his life; whoever does not consider the future, falls heedless into everything."

[45] Dante Alighieri, La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio, 3rd ed., ed. Daniele Mattalia (Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1984).

> Dalla sinistra quattro facean festa,
> in porpora vestite, dietro al modo
> d'una di lor ch'avea tre occhi in testa.
>
> [By the left wheel came four with festal tread,
> In purple following in their order due
> One of them, who had three eyes in her head.
> Purgatorio, The Portable Dante, trans. L. Binyon
> (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 29.130-32].

Boccaccio, Giovanni, Il Decameron, ed. Eduardo Sanguineti, with a commentary by Attilio Momigliano, Collezione Di Scolastica Di Classici Italiani (Turin: G. B. Petrini, 1959)

> Come io credo che voi consciate, il senno de'mortali non consiste solamente nell'avere a memoria le cose preterite o conoscere le presenti, ma per l'una e per l'altra di queste sapere antiveder le future è da'solenni uomini senno grandissimo reputato ["The wisdom of mortals consists, as I think you know, not only in remembering the past and apprehending the present, but in being able, through a knowledge of each, to anticipate the future." The Decameron, trans. G. H. McWilliam (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) 10.10]. Note the assumption by the speaker that this

the four cardinal virtues, a personified Prudence is represented as leading the three other cardinal virtues, and as having three eyes, one each for the past, present and future. It has been suggested that Chaucer took Criseyde's curious lament at having two eyes instead of three from Dante's image, but the iconographic tradition is certainly rich enough that we do not need to look only at Dante as Chaucer's source.[46] The image is widely dispersed in medieval culture, and, though not sources for Chaucer's image, prudence with three eyes (or faces) is represented graphically in the pavement in front of the

---

formulation is common knowledge.

John Lydgate, The Fall of Princes, ed. Henry Bergen, Early English Text Society Extra Series 123, vol. 3 (London: Oxford UP, for the Early English Text Society, 1924) 8.2388-90.

> Thynges passed to haue in remembrance,
> Conserue wisli thynges in presence,
> For thynges to come afforn mak ordenaunce.

Thomas Hoccleve, The Regement of Princes, ed. F. J. Furnivall, Early English Text Society Extra Series 72 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., for the Early English Text Society, 1897) 4765-67. Prudence

> Of þynges past, and ben, & þat schul be:
> The endë seeþ, and eek mesúreth, sche.

[46] Lloyd J. Matthews, "Chaucer's Personification of Prudence in Troilus (V.743-749): Sources in the Visual Arts and Manuscript Scholia, English Language Notes, 13 (1976): 249-55. Matthews argues that Chaucer may have found Criseyde's image of three-eyed Prudence in Dante. Matthews notes that the passage from the Purgatorio does not name the three-eyed figure as Prudence. But he does note several illustrated manuscripts of the type that could have been available to Chaucer, either during his trip to Florence in 1372-73 or from prominent Italian trading families resident in England during his tenure as Controller of Customs, which label the three-eyed figure as Prudence either in rubrics or in marginal commentaries and glosses. See the frontispiece to this paper.

cathedral at Sienna and in the Baptistry of Bergamo.[47] Prudence is still being represented this way well into the Renaissance as in Titian's painting, Prudentia, which shows three human faces looking to the past, present and future. The human faces surmount three animal faces—a lion, a dog and a wolf—just as they were depicted in Macrobius's description of Serapis in Saturnalia.[48]

The rich literary and iconographic heritage of prudence does not tell us much about how it is acquired and practised. It is a virtue acquired by practice, but one cannot rely solely on one's own inner resources in its acquisition. Thomas continues his discussion of prudence by describing three more connected virtues which represent its pars potentialis. Thomas returns to Aristotle's own terminology, and he illuminates vital concerns about the role of deliberation in the definition of prudence. We have seen εὐβουλία translated as "deliberation," or "excellence in deliberation," but Thomas translates it as bona consiliatio, or bene consiliativa.[49] Thomas argues that the willingness to take good counsel constitutes a virtue because the perfection of a virtue is in right reason and

> de ratione virtutis humanae est quod faciat actum hominis bonum. Inter ceteros autem actus hominis bonum proprium est ei consiliari: quia hoc importat quandam rationis inquisitionem circa agenda.[50]

[47] Noted in Seznec 120.

[48] Seznec 120 and fig. 40. Seznec argues that Macrobius's text is the direct source of Titian's image. The double image suggests that time can have two aspects according to whether reason is an operating power.

[49] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q51.A1. "Good counsel," or the "disposition to take good counsel."

[50] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q51.A1. "The reason of human virtue is that which makes a man's acts good. Among the acts of man, it is proper for

Good counsel is also part of right reason because no good counsel could both remain good and aid a deliberation aimed at accomplishing an evil end, or in evil means to a good end. As in Aristotle's definition of prudence, no sinner takes good counsel because sinners do not direct themselves to virtuous ends, and they are forgetful of virtuous means:

> Requiritur enim ad bene consiliandum non solum adinventio vel excogitatio eorum quae sunt opportuna ad finem, sed etiam aliae circumstantiae: scilicet tempus congruum, ut nec nimis tardus nec nimis velox sit in consiliis; et modus consiliandi, ut scilicet sit firmus in suo consilio; et aliae huiusmodi debitae circumstantiae, quae peccator peccando non observat.[51]

Good counsel entails a research into ends, while prudence is directive towards those ends. Taking counsel precedes judgment which itself precedes the direction of prudence. Good counsel and prudence, while not the same virtue, correspond to one another: counsel is not a virtue distinct from prudence but is subordinate to prudence.

The two remaining potential parts of prudence are synesis (σύνεσις) and gnome (γνώμη) which in Aristotle are "understanding" and "judgment" respectively, but in Thomas, judgment of common and of speculative causes. The prudent will seek not only good counselors, but also those who judge rightly about the quality of the counsel. Synesis

---

him to take counsel because [counsel] introduces, at the time of reckoning, an investigation around what must be done."

[51] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q51.A1. "The disposition towards taking good counsel requires not only the discovery or contrivance of those things fitted to the end, but still other circumstances: obviously the appropriate time, not too slowly nor too quickly in taking counsel; and the mode of taking counsel, so that he is firm in his counsel; and other things of this sort, owing to circumstances, which the sinner does not heed in his sinning."

is the faculty of judging by the common rules of conduct, and gnome is the faculty of judging in speculative matters. They are distinguished in the same way that Aristotle distinguishes science and wisdom in that each considers a different order of principle. It is worth noting that Thomas considers "judgment" and "understanding" as nearly synonymous terms. Again, counsel depends on the experience of the counselor, judgment, on the understanding of present circumstances, and prudence, on foreseeing and directing good ends.

The reliance on the wisdom and experience of counselors is not the only means of acquiring prudence. Literature itself contains much in the way of experience and wisdom. In a literary context, the three part structure of prudence underlies the idea expressed in the opening lines of Gower's Vox Clamantis that

> Scriptura veteris capiunt exempla futuri,
> Nam dabit experta res magis esse fidem.[52]

The writings of the ancients represent a kind of memory that, if we apply our intelligence and read them aright, will give us a foretaste of what is to come. The task for the prudent reader of ancient tales is to choose the right tale, the tale that best suits the present situation and whose ending is a prediction of the future. Chaucer's passage on this theme in The Legend of Good Women contains the same idea. Chaucer tell us that

> Than mote we to bokes that we fynde,
> Thurgh whiche that olde thinges ben in mynde,
> And to the doctrine of these olde wyse,

[52] John Gower, Vox Clamantis, ed. G. C. Macaulay, The Complete Works of John Gower (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1902.) 1.1-2.

> The writings of the ancients hold examples for the future,
> For a proven thing will provide more to be trusted.

Yeve credence, in every skylful wyse,
That tellen of these olde appreved stories
O holynesse, of regnes, of victories,
Of love, of hate, of other sondry thynges,
Of whiche I may not maken rehersynges.
And yf that olde bokes were aweye,
Yloren were of remembraunce the keye.
Wel ought us thanne honouren and beleve
These bokes, there we han noon other preve.[53]

The endless variety of life represented in old stories—holiness, reigns, and other sundry things—provides us with a bank of cultural memories. The individual memory is so extraordinarily limited that it is possible for Chaucer to conclude that, without books, we have no other experience to guide us, "noon other preve." If the memories contained in books were lost, we would quite literally be deprived of our experience and, thus, of our ability to arrange our conduct for the best future.

The three parts of prudence and its means of acquisition represent a basic structure, but its relationships to the other three cardinal virtues also distinguish it as a special virtue. One can hardly be truly just, brave, or temperate until one has discerned the correct and practical actions required for the exercise of justice, fortitude and temperance. As Christine de Pisan says, in a typical medieval formulation, "prudence and wisdome be moderis and conditoures of all vertues, withoute the which the tothir may not be well gouernyd."[54]

Agathon, in Plato's Symposium, spoke of the god of Love in terms of his justice, fortitude and temperance. Aristotle's discussion of

[53] Geoffrey Chaucer, The Legend of Good Women, ed. M. C. E. Shaner, The Riverside Chaucer, 17-28.

[54] Christine de Pisan, The Epistle of Othea, trans. Stephen Scrope, Early English Text Society Original Series 264 (London: Oxford UP, for the Early English Text Society, 1970) 8.

prudence includes justice, temperance and fortitude as natural virtues which could be kept from viciousness by prudent knowledge of the aims of virtue. Cicero thought that the four cardinal virtues expressed the full scope of virtuous behavior, and Martin of Braga's advice to King Miro on the good behavior of a prince dealt exclusively with the four cardinal virtues. Even the Hebrew Liber sapientiae, Hellenistic though it is, groups these four virtues together:

> si iustitiam quis diligit, labores huius sunt virtutes: sobrietatem enim et prudentiam docet, iustitiam et fortitudinem, quibus utilius nihil est in vita hominibus.[55]

It remains to be answered whether these virtues are grouped together out of ancient habit or for simple convenience, or whether they are so grouped because an integral relationship exists between them.

For Ambrose, the connections between the four cardinal virtues are an eminently practical matter. In De Officiis Ministrorum, Ambrose cites a number of examples of men in whom the four cardinal virtues have existed together. Abraham, for instance, was wise to accept the commandment of God, just in returning the son he had received, courageous to restrain his parental feelings with reason, and temperate in the calm piety with which he undertook the steps necessary to sacrifice Isaac.[56]

Ambrose says that the well-head of duty is prudence. Justice cannot exist without prudence because the ability to foresee consequences

[55] Lib. sap. 8.7. "If someone esteems justice, the fruits of his labors are the virtues: that is to say, he teaches sobriety, prudence, justice and fortitude, by which there is nothing more useful in life for a man."

[56] De Offic. Minis. 25.119.

is necessary to determine if an act will be just or unjust. The virtues are reciprocal because the understanding that comes from the piety of justice is essential to prudence.[57] It is natural to all living creatures to seek to avoid harm, and all are, to that degree, prudent. All creatures herd together with their kind, and in this equity their behavior resembles justice.[58] The remaining of the four virtues are shown to be connected, again by practical example:

> Liquet igitur et has, et reliquas cognatas sibi esse virtutes. Siquidem et fortitudo quæ vel in bello tuetur a barbaris patriam, vel domi defendit infirmos, vel latronibus socios, plena sit justitiæ: et scire quo consilio defendat atque adjuvet, captare etiam temporum et locorum opportunitates, prudentiæ ac modestiæ sit: et temperantia ipsa sine prudentia modum scire non possit: opportunitatem noscere, et secundum mensuram reddere, sit justitiæ: et in omnibus istis magnanamitas necessaria sit, et quædam fortitudo mentis, plerumque et corporis; ut quis quod velit, possit implere.[59]

But Ambrose does not here explain why he considers these four virtues to be cardinal, or why other virtues could not be similarly related. We could ask why, for instance, generosity is not a virtue associated with fortitude in the example of the defence of the weak, or why it is not cardinal. Once again, the most thorough commentator is Thomas Aquinas.

[57] De Offic. Minis. 1.25.127.

[58] De Offic. Minis. 1.25.128.

[59] De Offic. Minis. 1.25.129. "It is evident, therefore, that both these and the remaining are related virtues. Indeed, fortitude, which in war keeps the country from barbarians and at home defends the weak from bandits, is full of justice: and to understand by which counsel it defends and also helps to seize opportunities of time and place, fortitude is part of prudence and also modesty: and temperance itself cannot know measure without prudence: to come to know opportunity, and secondly to restore measure, is part of justice: and in all these, magnanimity is necessary, and a certain fortitude of mind, and frequently of the body; so that it can complete what it wishes."

In order to understand how Thomas and his predecessors determine which four virtues should be cardinal virtues, we must go back to the very definition of virtue and back to the divisions of the soul into a variety of powers and faculties.[60] Loosely speaking, any natural or rational power can be referred to as a virtue, but it is only the perfection of the habit of a rational power that is properly called virtue. The action of a virtue is a good use of free will, and its perfection is the perfection of reason. There can be, consequently, no perfection of a vice, since vice is a falling away from reason. Ideas like "perfect sin" are mere metaphors that cannot possibly refer to genuine virtues.

Thomas says that intellectual virtues are in the rational part of the soul, and moral virtues are in the appetites. Prudence is primarily an intellectual virtue because it is right reason about what should be done. But inasmuch as right reason depends on the rectitude of the appetites, it is also a moral virtue. Now, the moral virtues can do without some of the intellectual virtues, such as wisdom and science, but they cannot do without prudence because prudence is the habit of choosing well, by right reason and with a free, good will. Without the habit of choosing well, the appetites cannot be rectified. Moral virtue is not freedom from the passions of the appetite, but the subordination of the passions to right reason. Virtue overcomes inordinate passion to produce ordinate passion.

Prudence, according to Thomas, could arguably be the sole cardinal moral virtue since it directs all others in the rectitude of the

[60] Summa Theo. 1-2.Qq55-65. The description which follows is entirely derived from these Questions.

appetite. But the genus of virtue can be divided into species since good is not the same in all things. Reason putting itself into order is called prudence. Reason putting something other than itself into order is called justice. When reason puts the passion into order, there are two virtues. The rectitude of reason in the concupiscent passions is called temperance. The rectitude of reason in the irascible passions is called fortitude. Prudence is the principal virtue of the genus, virtue, and the others, principal in their own species.

The four cardinal virtues are different in their different objects, but they are connected in their generic end, that of doing well. The different objects of the virtues overflow into one another:

> quidam distinguunt [virtutes] secundum quasdam generales conditiones virtutum: utpote quod discretio pertineat ad prudentiam, rectitudio ad iustitiam, moderantia ad temperantiam, firmitas animi ad fortitudinem, in quacumque materia ista considerentur. Et secundum hoc, manifeste apparet ratio connexionis: non enim firmitas habet laudem virtutis, si sit sine moderatione, vel rectitudine, aut discretione; et eadem ratio est de aliis.[61]

Thomas, like many before him, concludes that the connections between the four cardinal virtues are such that to be lacking in any one of the virtues is to be lacking in all. One cannot be virtuous unless one has the prudence to know what is a good end, the justice to do good equitably, the firmness of mind to persevere in the good and the clearness of mind to act prudently.

[61] Summa Theo. 1-2.Q65.A1. "Some people distinguish the virtues after certain general conditions of the virtues—wherein discretion pertains to prudence, rectitude to justice, moderation to temperance, firmness of mind to fortitude—in whatever matter they examine. And following this, the reason for the connections is plainly apparent: firmness, for example, does not have the praise of virtue if it is without moderation, rectitude, or discretion; and this same reason applies to the rest."

Such a great emphasis is put on Troilus's status as a prince in Troilus and Criseyde, that it is worthwhile closing this chapter with some remarks on the special moral obligations of a prince.[62] The proper conduct of princes is a theme that has exercised writers from antiquity, and Lydgate's redaction of Boccaccio's De Casibus Virorum Illustrium contains a series of commonplaces on these obligations.[63] The prince is specially obligated because of the example which he must provide to his people:

> Thei sholde be the merour and the liht,
> Transcende al othir be vertuous excellence,
> As exaumplaires of equite and riht. (8.2381-83)

But, the prince is also specially obligated because the very security of his realm depends on his own virtue:

> Ther is no rewm may stond in surete,
> Ferme nor stable in verray existence,
> Nor contune in long prosperite,
> But yif the throne of kyngli excellence
> Be supportid with iustise and clemence. (8.2353-57)

The hundred lines here devoted to the conduct of princes are almost a précis of Thomas Aquinas's articles on the four cardinal virtues. The prince must worship God, be just, merciful, honest, magnanimous, and magnificent in appearance, all of which are various manifestations of the four cardinal virtues. It is particularly suggestive in the study

[62] Cf. Chauncey Wood, The Elements of Chaucer's Troilus (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1984) 34-35. I owe a debt to Professor Wood for noting the considerable emphasis placed on Troilus's princely status in Troilus and Criseyde.

[63] The Fall of Princes is, in fact, a redaction of Laurence de Premierfait's French prose redaction of De Casibus, De Cas Des Nobles Hommes et Femmes. Lydgate, nonetheless, claims in his prologue that it is ultimately "Bochas's" book that he is translating.

of the character of Troilus that the prince must "geyn flesshli lustis arme hym in sobirnesse" (8.2402), because

> . . . sensualite can haue the maistrie
> Aboff resoun, be toknes at a preeff,
> Which many a lond haue brouht onto myscheeff. (8.2350-52)

The temperance of the prince is connected to the parts of his fortitude called stability and perseverance. He must be

> In suich a mene stable as eny ston,—
> Nat ouer glad for no prosperite,
> Nor ouer sad for non aduersite. (8.2397-99)

Prudence and temperance are, of course, reciprocal virtues. In his definition of prudence, Aristotle notes the etymological connection between prudence (φρόνεσις) and temperance (σωφροσύνη=soundness of thought, mind) and says "ἔνθεν καὶ τὴν σωφροσύνην τούτῳ προσαγορεύομεν τῷ ὀνόματι, ὡς σώζουσαν τὴν φρόνησιν."[64] He goes on to state that

> αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχαὶ τῶν πρακτῶν τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα τὰ πρακτά· τῷ δὲ διεφθαρμένῳ δι' ἡδονὴν ἢ λύπην εὐθὺς οὐ φαίνεται ἀρχή, οὐδὲ δεῖν τούτου ἕνεκεν οὐδὲ διὰ τοῦθ' αἱρεῖσθαι πάντα καὶ πράττειν· ἔστι γὰρ ἡ κακία φθαρτικὴ ἀρχῆς.[65]

The identification of "first principles of action" and "choosing means" is the business of the prudent. Thomas's paraphrase of this passage includes the phrase "delectatio maxime corrumpit existimationem prudentiae,"[66] and he explains that

[64] Ethics 6.5.5-6. "This accounts for the word Temperance, which signifies 'preserving prudence.'"

[65] Ethics 6.5.6. "The first principles of action are the end to which our acts are means; but a man corrupted by a love of pleasure or fear of pain, entirely fails to discern any first principle, and cannot see that he ought to choose and do everything as a means to this end, and for its sake; for vice tends to destroy the sense of principle."

[66] Summa Theo 2-2.Q53.A6. "pleasure destroys altogether the judgment of prudence."

> vitia carnalia intantum magis extinguunt iuducium rationis inquantum longius abducunt a ratione.[67]

While Macrobius cites moderation as one of the parts of temperance,[68] Joseph Pieper points out that Thomas avoids including it because it is "too negative in its implication and signifies too exclusively restriction, curtailment, curbing, bridling [and] repression."[69] Despite the emphasis on immoderate sensual behaviour of all kinds, the essence of temperance in Thomas is in the "serenity of spirit":

> Et ideo tranquillitas animi per quandam excellentiam attribuitur temperantiae, quamvis communiter conveniat omnibus virtutibus.[70]

Natural appetites are not in themselves corrupt, but can be

> corrumpitur per ea quibus allicitur homo ad recedendum a regula rationis et legis divinae.[71]

As one is drawn away from reason, appetites become corrupted and the soul less serene. It is, in fact, an act of charity to the body to

[67] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q53.A6. "Carnal vices extinguish the judgment of reason all the more the further they lead away from reason."

[68] Macrobius, Som. Scip. 1.8.7. Macrobius also includes modestia (modesty), verecundia (shame), abstinentia (self-restraint), castitas (chastity), honestas (respectability), parcitas (frugality), sobrietas (sobriety) and pudicitia (purity). Thomas accepts some these parts, adding others and renaming some. "Moderation" is certainly part of his vocabulary, but he does not name moderation as an integral virtue of temperance preferring modesty as a more positive virtue.

[69] Josef Pieper 146.

[70] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q141.A2. "Therefore tranquillity of the mind is assigned to temperance by excellence, albeit it belongs commonly to all the virtues."

[71] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q141.A2. ". . . corrupted chiefly by those things which entice man into withdrawing from the rule of reason and Divine law."

satisfy such appetites as keep the body healthy and uncorrupted, and we ought to love what is divine in its creation while longing for the removal of the evil effects of sin and corruption.[72] It is, further, an act of intemperance to become insensible to sensual pleasures and pains. Pleasures and pains are necessary to the continuation of the life of the individual and the life of the species, and they are necessary to the very acts of reason.[73]

Naturally, prudence is the most important of the virtues to be practiced by a prince. Like Aquinas, Lydgate asserts that divine providence is the model for earthly prudence, and the prince must look to that model as he governs:

> So be discrecioun of natural prouidence
> To tempre ther rigour with merci & clemence;
> What shal falle afforn[e] caste al thynges,
> As apparteneth to princis & to kynges.
>
> Thynges passed to haue in remembrance,
> Conserue wisli thynges in presence,
> For thynges to come afforn mak ordenaunce,
> Folwe the tracis of vertuous contynence,
> Ageyn all vices to make resistence. (8.2384-92)[74]

And, of course, the prudent prince will take good counsel from wise and experienced couselors:

> Lat hym also for his gret avail
> Haue such aboute hym to be in presence,
> Notable princis to be of counsail,
> Swich as toforn haue had experience
> Tueen good and euel to knowe the difference. (8.2416-20)

The paramount importance of good counsel will become apparent in the

[72] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q25.A5.

[73] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q142.A2.

[74] See also Summa Theo. 1.Q22.A1.

next chapter on Chaucer's "Tale of Melibee." Melibee is the head of a household, and he is in desperate need of good counsel.

In The Regement of Princes, Thomas Hoccleve is even more forthright in his recommendation of prudence to his prince. Hoccleve begins his treatise on princely virtue by examining justice. In Hoccleve's view, as in Aristotle's, justice contains all other virtues and is the virtue most proper to a prince:

> Lawëful iustice is, as in maner,
> Al vertu; and who wol han þis justice,
> The lawe of crist, to kepë mote he leere.
> Now if þat lawe forbeede euery vice,
> And commande al good þing, and it cherice,
> ffulfillë lawë, is vertu perfyt,
> And in-iustice is of al vertu qwyt. (2500-2506)

But other forms of virtue are also important to the prince. It is hardly surprising that the four cardinal virtues are among the most important, or that prudence is preeminent among them:

> Prudence, attemprauncë, strengthe, and right,
> Tho fourë ben vertuës principal;
> Prudencë gooth by-fore, and ȝeveth light
> Of counseil, what þo other thre do schal,
> That þey may wirkë, be it greet or smal,
> Aftir hir reed, wiþ-outen whom no man
> Wel vnto god, né þe world lyuë can. (4754-60)

Prudence causes a man to be governed by reason, and if prudence is important to all people in common, it is especially important to a prince. Prudence is suddenly personified, and she allows the prince to be loved by his people:

> Prudence hath leuer louëd be þan drad;
> Ther may no prince in his estate endure,
> Ne ther-yn any whilë standë sad,
> But he be louëd; for loue is armure
> Of suerëte. (4782-86)

Because it is Prudence who inspires the people with love of their prince, the prince cannot govern long unless he is prudent. It is

Prudence who ultimately ensures the justice of a prince.

Prudence plays an important part in ethical discussions in the pagan world, but by the twelfth century it had become central to the discussion of Christian moral virtue. Not only did prudence represent a continuity from and a recuperation of pagan ethical systems, but it became the virtue most essential to Christian moral behavior. It became part of both the moral and the religious duty of all people to act prudently. If Thomas Aquinas's assertion of the value of prudence as a social virtue is admitted, the prince is most obligated to be prudent, since his actions have the greatest social consequences. As we have seen, Chaucer's successors, Lydgate and Hoccleve, were concerned with prudence especially with regard to the rule of princes. By turning now to Chaucer's own work, we will be able to determine whether Lydgate and Hoccleve were developing themes already present in Chaucer's works.

II

"He that is pacient governeth hym by greet prudence": Prudence, Melibee and Some Others

When Criseyde laments that she has only two eyes instead of three, she claims that she is imprudent because she lacks the third eye which would allow her to foresee the consequences of her actions:

> But future tyme, er I was in the snare,
> Koude I nat sen; that causeth now my care. (5.748-749)

It should now be clear that this imagery could have been drawn from any number of sources in an extremely rich and vital literary and iconographic tradition. Although it should not surprise us in the least that Chaucer came into contact with this tradition, we may well ask whether Criseyde's concern with the prudence of her actions in Troilus and Criseyde is the only place where Chaucer is concerned with prudence, or whether the interest recurs elsewhere in his work.

The prudent ruler, as we have seen, rules rightly by taking good counsel, and a disposition towards taking good counsel is essential to his prudence. Like its predecessors, the "Tale of Melibee" sets out to define and examine the nature of the ruler's good counsel, how good counsel is discovered, and how it is exercised.[1] The argument is care-

[1] Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Tale of Melibee," ed. Traugott Lawlor, The Canterbury Tales, The Riverside Chaucer. Chaucer's "Tale of Melibee" is a close, but stylistically independent, translation of Renaud de Louens's Le Livre de Mellibee et Prudence. Renaud's work is itself an adaptation of Albertanus of Brescia's Liber Consolationis et Consilii ex Quo Hausta est Fabula Gallica De Melibeo. Renaud made a considerable number of excisions and substitutions of material in his adaptation, but he remains true to the intentions of Albertanus's work. The work of Chaucer and Renaud cannot be said to represent a radical revision of Albertanus's book.

ful, precise and detailed, and it addresses one of the most vital concerns of medieval ethical philosophy.

Prudence's counsel to Melibee is quite unlike anything else in the Canterbury Tales, and there exists no equivalent embodiment of good counsel in Troilus and Criseyde. The "Melibee" is a philosophical dialogue hung on a narrative thread, and Chaucer's translation of Boece is, perhaps, the nearest thing to it in the whole of his work. But examples of bad counsel, bad in its devising and execution, can be found throughout the Canterbury Tales, especially in the Nun's Priest's and Merchant's tales. Pertelote's counsel to Chantecleer, Placebo's counsel to January, and even Pandarus's counsel to Troilus, as we shall see, do not resemble Prudence's counsel except as they are precisely opposite to good counsel.

Curiously, a significant number of the modern critics of the "Melibee" argue that the tale is a deadly-dull, "moralizing" piece that is simultaneously an abysmal failure as literary art and a highly-successful rhetorical joke. The idea that the "Melibee" might be a joke bears directly on whether it actually does address important ethical concerns. If we believe that a medieval audience saw this tale as a parody of a high style of rhetoric, we must question whether they also saw its content as a parody of ethical treatises. We must at least glance at the arguments which suggest that the "Melibee" is a joke before we can judge whether it is a valid expression of moral and ethical ideas.

The idea that the "Melibee" might be a joke derives from several possible attitudes towards the tale. Critics most often argue that the moral content of the tale is trite and stupid, that the content is

itself a joke made funnier by a higher style of rhetoric than it deserves.[2] Alternatively, the tale must be a parody because its rhetoric is so excessive and over-blown that it far overshadows any good advice that Prudence might give.[3] A third possibility is that Prudence herself gives bad or inappropriate advice.[4] These possibilities are combined, naturally, in their several permutations, and, if any one view unites the tale's detractors, it is the old idea that the "Melibee" is Chaucer's revenge on the Host for interrupting his tale of "Sir Thopas."

The argument that the "Melibee" is a parody has depended almost entirely on analysis of its rhetoric. Critics consistently argue that the rhetoric is exaggerated to the point of parody, and they almost always point to the tale's supposedly excessive prolixity, and particularly to its use of amplificatio. These particular features have been compared, in the Appendix below, to the same features in the "Parson's Tale." As the Appendix demonstrates, Chaucer has not been markedly more or less prolix in the "Parson" or the "Melibee," and the rhetorical features of the "Melibee" in general are unremarkable for their time, as has been shown repeatedly.[5] Parody fails unless it is recognized as

[2] For example, Dolores Palomo, "What Chaucer Really Did to the Le Livre de Melibee," Philological Quarterly 53 (Summer 1974): 304-320; Ruth Waterhouse and Gwen Griffiths, "'Sweete Wordes' of Non-sense: The Deconstruction of the Moral Melibee (Part I)," Chaucer Review 23 (1989): 338-361.

[3] For example, Waterhouse and Griffiths; see also, Trevor Whittock, A Reading of the Canterbury Tales (London: Cambridge UP, 1968).

[4] Palomo; Paull F. Baum, Chaucer: A Critical Appreciation (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1958) 80.

[5] Diane Bornstein, "Chaucer's Tale of Melibee as an Example of the Style clergial," Chaucer Review 12 (1978): 236-54; Margaret Schlauch, "Chaucer's Prose Rhythms," PMLA 65 (1950): 568-589; Margaret Schlauch, "The Art of Chaucer's Prose," Chaucer and Chaucerians, ed. D. S. Brewer (London: Nelson, 1966) 163-166; Norman Blake, The English Language in

parody by its audience, and it is difficult to see how an audience was to recognize exaggeration in a style already so grossly exaggerated by modern standards.

Modern tastes and attitudes play a considerably larger role in assessments of the "Melibee" than is generally acknowledged. Critics who see elements of parody in the "Melibee" remain unconvinced by the idea that many medieval readers actually enjoyed reading "a moral tale vertuous," and that a moral tale could be thought "murye." Nevertheless, the idea bears repeating. The modern distaste for the "Melibee" is more than a mere shift in taste since the Middle Ages but also a shift in our view of morally didactic literature. We often consider ourselves the arbiters of our own morality, and we do not wish to be "edified." The term "edification" has itself taken on more than a slightly pejorative sense, and we smile indulgently and adopt an ironic tone whenever we refer to something as "edifying." The modern distaste for this kind of didactic literature marks a measure of our distance from the Middle Ages: not only was there often a marked preference for didactic works, but it seems that such works were received as beautiful and pleasurable, and it seems that readers could take pleasure in edification.

Three short examples should serve to illustrate the point. A couple of generations ago, Margaret Deanesly studied more than 7500 wills of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries, of which 338

Medieval Literature (London: Methuen, 1979); Traugott Lawler, "Chaucer," Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1984) 291-314.

bequeathed books, and she observed that the overwhelming numbers of such books were works of piety, with romances coming in a distant second.[6] Similarly, Daniel Silvia's study of medieval anthologies which include Chaucer's works shows that they include a preponderance of "moral" tales, including the "Melibee," a few "courtly" tales of a serious nature, such as the "Knight's Tale," and none of the fabliaux.[7] Because Chaucer's name frequently does not appear with the tales, the important inference is not about what a medieval audience thought of Chaucer, but what a medieval audience found culturally valuable.

Finally, critics have also argued that the "Melibee" must be a parody because it is too stilted rhetorically and has far more proverbs than are necessary. However, Christine de Pisan's Epître D'Othéa is a work even more rigid and predictable in its form than the "Melibee." It consists of one hundred chapters, one per page in the manuscripts, each made up of a single quatrain "text," a "gloss" which includes at least one classical "sentence," and an "allegory" which contains at least one Biblical quotation. The work is even more unrelentingly didactic than the "Melibee." Nevertheless, it was popular enough to be translated into English three times in the century following its first translation, and it was kept in print until well into the sixteenth-century.[8]

[6] Margaret Deanesly, "Vernacular Books in the 14th & 15th Centuries," Modern Language Review 15 (1920): 349-58. See also, Richard Firth Green, Poets and Prince Pleasers: Literature and The Court in The Late Middle Ages (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1980) 59. Even among the many diversions and entertainments at court, such things as saints lives were popular literature.

[7] Daniel S. Silvia, "Some Fifteenth-Century Manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales," Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins, ed. Beryl Rowland (London: Unwin, 1974) 153-163.

[8] Curt F. Bühler, Introduction, The Epistle of Othea by Christine de Pisan, trans. Stephen Scrope, ed. C.F. Bühler, Early English Text

The "Melibee" and its predecessors were extremely popular in their own age, and they were understood and accepted as valid and compelling moral treatises. The question for our age is how divorced we believe Chaucer was from his own time and its tastes. The "Melibee" was not thought of as a parody for at least five hundred years after Chaucer translated it. If we believe that the "Melibee" is a parody of high style, or of moral treatises generally, then we must also believe not only that the "Melibee" was an utter failure for its original audience, and through most of its history, but that Chaucer was content to leave the tale—third longest in the Canterbury Tales and the only complete tale given to his own character—as a literary failure.

Even if there is nothing remarkable about the rhetoric, some critics contend that Prudence's advice to Melibee is trite and stupid, or much worse,[9] and their language betrays a fundamental lack of sympathy with the material.[10] Donald MacDonald expresses the quite

---

Society OS 264 (London: Oxford UP, for the Early English Text Society 1970), xii-xiii. See also Thor Sundby, Introduction, Liber Consolationis et Consilii ex Quo Hausta est Fabula Gallica De Melibeo et Prudentia by Albertanus of Brescia, Chaucer Society Second Series 8 (London: Trübner, for the Chaucer Society, 1873) xx. Sundby also notes in passing that Gautier of Lille's Moralium Dogma, Vincent de Beauvais' Speculum Doctrinale, and John of Salibury's Policraticus are constructed almost entirely from quoted sentences from the ancients. Where Albertanus differs is in the use of large amounts of Biblical material as an additional source.

[9] Palomo calls the "Melibee" "fundamentally simple-minded" (306) and refers to "the essential vacuity of the treatise" (309); Whittock writes of the author's pose of "contrite stupidity" (209); Waterhouse and Griffiths say that the "misapplication" of authorities "confirm's Prudence's shallow approach" (II 30); and Baum says that Chaucer "might well have appreciated its cardinal weakness, which is not the extent but the falsity of its moralizing" (80).

[10] Palomo calls it "17,000 words of the wit and wisdom of Polonius" (307); Whittock calls it "an enormous bore" (211); and, Waterhouse and Griffiths say that the tale is "not just a serious,

reasonable idea that the outcome of events in the "Melibee" would have to be different for Prudence's advice to be considered wrong-headed:

> If the story is changed, for example, so that Prudence's advice to Melibeus becomes based not on her wise estimate of Melibeus's problem but on some grievously mistaken view of the situation, with the consequence that Melibeus' acceptance of her counsel brings about not a happy resolution but instead results (let us say) in public disgrace and ridicule for her husband, Prudence's character must undergo an inevitable and radical change. No longer wise, she becomes foolish; no longer prudent, she becomes wrong-headed and misguided; no longer modestly persuasive, she becomes insistently meddlesome. As a direct consequence of this single alteration, in fact, she comes to bear considerable resemblance to another dispenser of wifely wisdom, Pertelote in the Nun's Priest's Tale.[11]

Critics who consider the tale to be full of bad, trite or stupid advice seem not to take into account that, as McDonald says, no such consequences follow in the "Melibee." Prudence's advice does not result in Melibee's shame and ridicule, but, on the contrary, ends with his satisfaction at the outcome of events and with his moral ennoblement as a man. If we wish to stretch the point, however, we might question whether Prudence's advice has anything to do with the outcome of events or whether events turn out fortuitously as in the tale of the Nun's Priest. In order to answer this question, we will need to look at the moral content of Prudence's counsel, at her actions, and at the problem of the allegory in the tale.

---

boring moralizing piece of prose," but also a meaningless joke (II 61). All of them prefer to call the tale "moralizing" rather than "moral."

[11] Donald McDonald, "Proverbs, Sententiae, and Exempla in Chaucer's Comic Tales: The Function of Comic Misapplication," Speculum 41 (1966): 456-457.

Paul Ruggiers aptly links Chaucer and the "Melibee" to the same tradition of moral and theological virtue which produced Dante's Divine Comedy, and, although the two poets order the Purgatorial experience differently, the same pageant of virtues passes through both Dante's Comedy and Chaucer's two great prose tales.[12] The suggestion is highly stimulating: the "Melibee" begins with Prudence counselling Melibee to fortitude and temperance; her counsels will lead Melibee to a just resolution of his conflict, and he will consummate his just act by an act of charity. According to Thomas Aquinas, charity depends on the pre-existence of the other theological virtues, faith and hope, and stands in a reciprocal relationship to them as prudence does to the cardinal virtues: by itself, charity presupposes faith and hope.[13] But, if Richard Hoffman is correct in his view that the name of Melibee's daughter, Sophie (Σοφία, Sapientia, or "wisdom"), was a common emblem of Christ, Melibee's act of charity restores not only his wisdom, but also his faith and hope by restoring Christ to him.[14]

But the system of the four cardinal and three theological virtues was not the only arrangement of the virtues known to Chaucer and other

[12] Paul G. Ruggiers, "Serious Chaucer: The Tale of Melibeus and the Parson's Tale," Chaucerian Problems and Perspectives: Essays Presented to Paul E. Beichner C.S.C., ed. Edward Vasta and Zacharias P. Thundy (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1979) 85-86.

[13] Summa Theo. 1-2.Q65.A4.

[14] For example, Rabanus Maurus, Glossa Ordinaria, Patrologiae Latinae 113 (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, n.d.), 1081-1082, cited in Richard L. Hoffman, "Chaucer's Melibee and Tales of Sondry Folk," Classica et Mediaevalia 30 (1969): 563-564. Hoffman notes that "the recognition by Chaucer's audience that 'Sophie' and Sapientia are the same is clear from the fact that one group of nine manuscripts of the Tales actually designates the daughter not 'Sophie' but 'Sapience.'"

moral commentators in the Middle Ages. We cannot overlook the virtues associated with the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit which represent a complementary system and which parallel and inform the cardinal and theological virtues. When Prudence begins her discussion of counsel, she advises Melibee to seek the counsel of God first and foremost:

> "Now, sire," quod dame Prudence, "and syn ye vouche sauf to been governed by my conseil, I wol enforme yow how ye shul governe yourself in chesynge of youre conseillours. Ye shul first in alle youre werkes mekely biseken to the heighe God that he wol be youre conseillour; and shapeth yow to swich entente that he yeve yow conseil and confort, as taughte Thobie his sone: 'At alle tymes thou shalt blesse God, and praye hym to dresse thy weyes, and looke that alle thy conseils been in hym for everemoore.' Seint Jame eek seith: 'If any of yow have nede of sapience, axe it of God.'" (7.1115-19)

The quotation from the Vulgate Tobit is particularly apt and shows a notable similarity to some of the themes of the "Melibee." Tobit, near death, prepares his son Tobias for a journey to settle an old debt. Tobit urges his son to be generous with his means, to be just to his workmen, to be temperate in his habits, to be circumspect in his dealings, and to seek the counsel of God and of sensible persons.[15] The resemblance here to the four cardinal virtues should be evident, and, although for very different reasons, Prudence ultimately counsels Melibee in all these things. Prudence's long digression on the proper use of riches goes to the magnificence and magnanimity which are part of fortitude. Melibee will be merciful with his enemies which is part of justice. He will have tempered his passion for war and have been prudent in the taking of counsel. Prudence's subsequent advice, to avoid ire, covetousness and hastiness, all vices opposed to the Seven Gifts,

[15] Tobit 4. Prudence's quotation is from 4.19.

becomes all the clearer when we understand the full import of Tobit's advice to Tobias. Tobit's advice actually comes in seven distinct parts which correspond to the virtues associated with the Seven Gifts.[16]

The Seven Gifts system appears to be regular. It always has seven Gifts—timor domini, pietas, scientia, fortitudo, consilium, intellectus and sapientia.[17] It always has seven corresponding vices or sins, seven corresponding classes of virtue, and seven corresponding beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. But the virtues and vices assigned to each Gift tend to shift from one Gift to another according to the various commentators.[18] We have so far examined the concepts surrounding only the cardinal virtue of prudence in any detail, but it is evident that the ideas are complex. The concepts surrounding the remaining cardinal virtues are equally complicated. But, because of the tendency in the Middle Ages to assign different virtues to different Gifts, the cardinal virtues are much more susceptible to schematic analysis than the system of the Seven Gifts and their virtues and vices. If, however, we wish to understand virtue through the Seven Gifts as Chaucer did, we should turn to his own exposition of them.

The great centre of the "Parson's Tale" is, of course, the commentary on the seven deadly sins and their remedial virtues. The vices

[16] Tobit 4. The parts of Tobit's advice not mentioned above are to remain chaste and to give alms in charity.

[17] Fear of God, piety, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, understanding (or intelligence), and wisdom.

[18] For example, Rosemond Tuve's diagram of the Gifts associates mansuetudo with with the gift of pietas, but the vices of gula and luxuria may be associated alternately with the gifts of intellectus or sapientia (442). Chaucer's Parson, on the other hand, associates mansuetude with the gift of scientia.

named by the Parson that are associated with each Gift are superbia, invidia, ira, accidia, avaritia, gula and luxuria.[19] The Parson also offers several virtues as remedies against the vices as follows: against pride he offers "humilitee"; against envy, "charitee" and the love of God and neighbours; against ire, "debonairitee" and "pacience"; against sloth, fortitudo, "magnanimitee" and "magnificence"; against avarice, misericorde (mercy), "largesse" and "charitee" again; against gluttony, "abstinence"; and against lechery, "continence"—exactly the virtues recommended to Tobias.

Although some of the virtues of the Seven Gifts are in common with the parts of the cardinal and theological virtues, they appear to form a distinctly different system. But Thomas Aquinas explains that there is no vital distinction between the two systems:

> Si loquamur de dono et virtute secundem rationem, sic nullam oppositionem habent ad invicem. Nam ratio virtutis sumitur secundum quod perficit hominem ad bene agendum, ut supra dictum est: ratio autem doni sumitur secundem comparationem ad causam a qua est. Nihil autem prohibet illud quod est ab alio ut donum, esse perfectivum alicuius ad bene operandum: praesertim cum supra dixerimus quod virtutes quaedam nobis sunt infusae a Deo. Unde secundum hoc, donum a virtute distingui non potest.[20]

The Seven Gifts and the cardinal virtues are distinguished intellectually, however, since the Seven Gifts are infused in us from

[19] Pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lechery.

[20] Summa Theo. 1-2.Q68.A1. "If we are speaking about gift and virtue, following the meaning of the terms, they have no opposition between them because the idea of virtue follows that which perfects man in doing well: the idea of gift follows comparison of the cause from which virtue springs. Nothing, on the other hand, prohibits that which comes from the one as a gift, to be perfective of the other in doing well, especially as we have already said above [1-2.Q63.A3] that our virtues are infused in us by God. Whence it is not possible for a gift to be distinguished from a virtue."

the Spirit, by external means, and the cardinal virtues develop within us through their practice. Although Thomas elsewhere tries to reconcile the two systems schematically, his attempt falls short because the theological and cardinal virtues each share parts with more than one of each of the virtues associated with the Seven Gifts, and he assigns two Gifts to faith and none to temperance.[21]

But the cardinal virtues do relate to the Seven Gifts and their virtues in several ways. Prudence contains or resembles consilium, intellectus, scientia and sapientia. Justice is related to scientia through its association with equity and measure, and to consilium through its association with misericorde,[22] and, in the main Ciceronian-Macrobian tradition, pietas is one of the parts of justice.[23] Fortitude is obviously related to fortitudo and to consilium through its association with "largesse." Temperance is related to intellectus and sapientia through their association with "chastitee" and "abstinence" and to timor domini through its association with humility.[24]

Although Prudence does not develop ideas about virtues as schematically as the Parson, she nonetheless gives a practical demonstration in counselling the same virtues. After visiting Melibee's

[21] Summa Theo. 2-2.Qq8, 9, 45, 52, 101, 121, 139. Thomas associates faith with scientia and intellectus, hope with timor domini, charity with sapientia, prudence with consilium, justice with pietas, and fortitude with fortitudo.

[22] Tuve 442.

[23] De Invent. 2.53.161.; Macrobius, Som. Scip. 1.8.8.

[24] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q161. Thomas Aquinas, for one, associates humility with temperance as a potential part.

enemies, she returns to Melibee to see what his judgment will be, and when he decides to be harsh she says:

> And therfore I prey yow that in this necessitee and in this nede ye caste yow to overcome youre herte. For Senec seith that "he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twies." And Tullius seith: "Ther is no thyng so comendable in a greet lord as whan he is debonaire and meeke, and appeseth him lightly." And I prey yow that ye wole forbere now to do vengeance, in swich a manere that youre goode name may be kept and conserved, and that men mowe have cause and mateere to preyse yow of pitee and of mercy, and that ye have no cause to repente yow of thyng that ye doon. For Senec seith, "He overcometh in an yvel manere that repenteth hym of his victorie." Wherfore I pray yow, lat mercy been in youre herte, to th'effect and entente that God almighty have mercy on yow in his laste juggement. (7.1858-1868)

"Mekeness" is the virtue that the Parson assigns to the vice opposing timor domini, and "debonairitee" is the virtue he assigns to scientia. "Pitee" corresponds to pietas, and "mercy" is the virtue assigned to consilium. Prudence teaches fortitudo when she argues elsewhere that true strength is not in towers but in the love of the people:

> "Warnestooryng," quod she, "of heighe toures and of grete edifices apperteyneth somtyme to pryde. And eek men make heighe toures, [and grete edifices] with grete costages and with greet travaille, and whan that they been accompliced, yet be they nat worth a stree, but if they be defended by trewe freendes that been olde and wise. And understoond wel that the gretteste and strongeste garnysoun that a riche man may have, as wel to kepen his persone as his goodes, is that he be biloved with hys subgetz and with his neighebores." (7.1335-1338)[25]

[25] In the Regement of Princes, Hoccleve connects a very similar idea directly to prudence of the prince:

> Prudence hath leuer loüed be þan drad;
> Ther may no prince in his estate endure,
> Ne ther-yn any whilë standë sad,
> But he be loüed; fór loue is armure
> Of seurëte. (4782-86)

The idea is ultimately Ciceronian, at least for the Middle Ages, and Cicero considers the the lesson learned from the death of Julius Caesar:

> Nec vero huius tyranni solum, quem armis oppressa pertulit

Here, too, she argues against pride, the vice opposed to timor domini. Prudence is persistent throughout the tale in questioning Melibee's understanding of her advice which goes to intellectus, and it is, of course, the daughter, Sophie, also sometimes called Sapientia, that Prudence wishes to see restored to Melibee.

As we have seen, the systems of the Seven Gifts and the cardinal virtues are complementary and mutually informing so that it is ultimately irrelevant whether Prudence emphasizes virtue in terms of the cardinal virtues or in terms of the virtues associated with the Seven Gifts, because, in the end, it is virtue itself that she counsels. But, if we can accept that the names of the characters are on some level allegorical, even if the allegory initially seems inconsistent, it appears to be most profitable to consider that the primary discourse on virtue takes place around the four cardinal virtues: it is Prudence, after all, who directs the discourse.

> civitas ac paret cum maxime mortuo, interitus declarat, quantum odium hominum valeat ad pestem, sed reliquorum similes exitus tyrannorum, quorum haud fere quisquam talem interitum effugit; malus enim est custos diuturnitatis metus contraque benivolentia fidelis vel ad perpetuitatem
> [The overthrow of this tyrant alone, who oppressed the citizenry by force of arms, and to whom they are subject even after his death, reveals that the hatred of men is vigorous and deadly; the similar fate of all other tyrants is that they usually do not escape such an overthrow; fear is indeed a bad safeguard of lasting power, while good-will, on the other hand, is faithful forever]. (De Offic. 2.7.23)

Cicero gives us this example in the context of the debate over whether trust in fortune or prudence will create the most co-operation in society. See the discussion of fortune and prudence (pp. 59-61), and the discussion of the examination of counselors (p.67 n.49), below.

A reading of the "Melibee" as an enactment of virtue becomes more intelligible if we understand the nature of allegory in the tale: parts of the tale's allegory have been so thoroughly misapprehended that they have become irresolvable "cruxes" for readers who understand the tale only as parodic or ironic. Many critics have, for instance, stumbled over the peculiar psychomachia that seems to require that Melibee forgive his three enemies, who are thought to be "the world, the flesh and the devil."[26] If it is true that Melibee must forgive the unforgivable, then every representation of virtue in the tale must become suspect.

But the "Melibee" is not of the classical type of allegory where there is a "constant and exact relationship between the literal detail and the meaning it points to." Charles Owen reminds us that the classical type was frequently evident in medieval writing but not always.[27] It is not necessarily true that, if Prudence represents the virtue of prudence, and Melibee the sinning man, then she can only ever be the virtue of prudence, and he can only ever be the sinning man. The three enemies are not necessarily, therefore, only ever the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Medieval allegory, like scriptural exegesis, may have four levels of interpretation: the literal, the allegorical, the moral and the

[26] Waterhouse and Griffiths I 345-46. Waterhouse and Griffiths argue precisely that, because Melibee must forgive the world, the flesh and the devil, "there is an irreconcilable gap between the narrative discourse and its story on the one hand and the potential allegory to which we are alerted by Dame Prudence herself on the other, since coherent parallels that fit into the syntagmatic line of each level do not exist."

[27] Charles A. Owen, Jr., "The Tale of Melibee," Chaucer Review 7 (1973): 275-80.

anagogic.[28] Literal characters in a narrative may be personifications at the allegorical level, but they do not simply stop being literal characters to become only pure abstractions. Prudence does not stop being Prudence the wife just because she also represents an enactment of the virtue of prudence. Similarly, when Prudence interprets Melibee's three enemies or Sophie's five wounds anagogically, they do not cease to be three real enemies or five real wounds. If I was to say that I became ill because God wished to punish me for my sins, I would not suddenly become well again because I had interpreted my illness as divine retribution. My literal illness would remain with me whether I understood it anagogically or not. God has infected me with a virus, say, because I have sinned; God has sent three enemies to Melibee because he has attached himself too much to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Prudence herself is quite clear on this point. She asserts that there is a relationship of cause and effect between Melibee's voluptuous sin and the three literal enemies who attack his family:

> Thou hast doon synne agayn oure Lord Crist, for certes, the three enemys of mankynde—that is to seyn, the flessh, the feend, and the world—thou hast suffred hem entre in to thyn herte wilfully by the wyndowes of thy body, and hast nat defended thyself suffisantly agayns hire assautes and hire temptaciouns, so that they han wounded thy soule in fyve places; this is to seyn, the deedly synnes that been entred into thyn herte by thy fyve wittes. <u>And in the same manere</u>, oure Lord Crist hath woold and suffred that thy three enemys been entred into thyn house by the wyndowes, and han ywounded thy doghter in the forseyde manere.
> (7.1420-1426, emphasis mine)[29]

[28] Tuve 3. Tuve warns us that in modern writing the four senses are themselves "more dogmatically and perseveringly applied than we find them to be by medieval writers," and she suggests that "it is well to let medieval works do their own defining."

[29] The marked phrase is the key phrase, which we can read as "therefore" or "and it follows that."

The passage is so perfectly clear that it should not need to be explicated, yet it is so often quoted as evidence that Melibee, in forgiving his enemies at the end of the tale, must forgive the devil. Owen argues that the three enemies of mankind do influence Melibee's behavior throughout the tale, and that they are the cause of his resistance to Prudence's advice. But he says that, when the wisest of the three literal enemies speaks, we need "not assume that it is the devil speaking."[30] Similarly, Rosemund Tuve, discussing the Dialogus creaturarum, a collection of allegorical fables, notes that in some

> we apprehend a likeness, and from it a moral point; but in several of these cases there is no metaphor to read, the comparison being based upon a property or situation quite literally predicated of the creatures treated.[31]

Tuve points out the story of Laurus, the bird who fills his ship so full that it sinks. The moral, that human captains also are greedy and overfill their ships, is allegorical, but the ship itself is not.

The presence of any level of allegory in a tale does not also mean that every detail of the story must fit into an allegorical pattern. Owen reminds us further that, when Prudence talks about Melibee's "lack of near kin and of the fact that his enemies' near kin, though much more numerous, are less 'siker' and 'stedefast' than his own more distant kin, it is not necessary to torture these details into allegorical significance or historical parallel."[32]

[30] Owen 277.

[31] Tuve 12-13.

[32] Owen 277.

The allegory of names in the tale ought to be quite obvious, either because we ought to know who Prudence is, or what she represents, or we should know the meaning of Sophie's name, or simply because we are told the meaning of a name—Melibee is a typically voluptuous man, too much concerned with his wealth and not enough with his soul:

> Thy name is Melibee, this is to seyn, "a man that drynketh hony." Thou hast ydronke so muchel hony of sweete temporeel richesses, and delices and honours of this world, that thou art dronken, and hast forgeten Jhesu Crist thy creatour. (7.1410-1412)

But it is precisely the failure to appreciate this basic allegorical function of the characters in the "Melibee" that bedevils modern commentary on this tale as much as the failure to appreciate the separation of levels of allegory. Prudence is a character in a tale to be sure, but we also cannot lose sight of her allegorical purpose: both of her aspects must be grasped simultaneously. Ruth Waterhouse and Gwen Griffiths create a delicious irony out of this misapprehension when they make the rather rash statement that "the concept of true wisdom becomes increasingly indeterminate as the tale progresses, for it is not as if Prudence is the final arbiter of wisdom."[33] If we are talking about wisdom in the practical realm of human affairs, we would be hard-pressed to find a single late medieval commentator on ethics who would agree with their latter statement.[34]

[33] Waterhouse and Griffiths I 356.

[34] Aristotle (Ethics 6.13.8) would certainly not agree since he says that prudence, though an inferior faculty to wisdom, nurtures and directs wisdom in much the same way as medicine nurtures and directs health to its own good:

> πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἄτοπον ἂν εἶναι δόξειεν, εἰ χείρων τῆς σοφίας οὖσα κυριωτέρα αὐτῆς ἔσται· ἡ γὰρ ποιοῦσα ἄρχει καὶ ἐπιτάττει περὶ ἕκαστον. (Ethics 6.12.3)

Modern critics are not the only ones to lose sight of Prudence's allegorical role. Harry Bailly, in the prologue to the Monk's Tale, expresses the wish that his own wife, Goodelief, was more like Prudence. This is not the only place where the Host shows off his limitations as a commentator: in the prologue to the "Merchant's Tale," both Harry Bailly and the Merchant express the wish that their wives were more like patient Griselda. The Host's response to both moral tales is inadequate because the purpose of exemplary tales is not to inspire in us the wish that others were more exemplary in their conduct, but to inspire us with the desire to become more exemplary in our own.

When I said of my hypothetical illness that I became ill because of my sins, I accepted responsibility for the illness much as if I had admitted that I was ill because I had not taken care of myself. The admission of personal responsibility for one's acts is a fundamental premise of ethics and, particularly, of the virtue of prudence. By interpreting the three literal enemies' attack as God's punishment for Melibee's overweening attachment to the his riches, pleasures, and vices, Prudence proposes that Melibee not only take responsibility for the condition of his life, but that he do something about it, particularly by liberating himself from his faith in the vicissitudes of Fortune:

> "Certes," quod Prudence, "if ye wol werke by conseil, ye shul nat assaye Fortune by no wey, ne ye shul nat lene or bowe unto hire, after the word of Senec, for 'thynges that

---

> [It would seem curious if Prudence, which is inferior to Wisdom, is nevertheless to have greater authority than Wisdom: yet the faculty [prudence] which creates a thing [wisdom] governs and gives orders to it].

> been folily doon, and that been in hope of Fortune, shullen nevere come to good ende.' And, as the same Senec seith, 'The moore cleer and the moore shynyng that Fortune is, the moore brotil and the sonner broken she is.' Trusteth nat in hire, for she nys nat stidefast ne stable, for whan thow trowest to be moost seur or siker of hire help, she wol faille thee and deceyve thee. And where as ye seyn that Fortune hath norissed yow fro youre childhede, I seye that in so muchel shul ye the lasse truste in hire and in hir wit. For Senec seith, 'What man that is norissed by Fortune, she maketh hym a greet fool.'"
> (7.1447-1455)

Boethius has reduced Fortune to mere eventum, or chance, by the time we reach Book V of the Consolatio Philosophiae. He writes that, if Fortune is defined as random events without causes, it simply cannot exist since God's providence contains the causes of all events.[35] Eventum, "hap" in Chaucer's translation, is no more than events arising from the unforeseen convergence of causes:

> Hap is an unwar betydinge of causes assembled in thingis that ben doon for som oothir thing; but thilke ordre, procedinge by an uneschuable byndinge togidre, whiche that descendeth fro the welle of purveaunce that ordeyneth alle thingis in hir places and in hir tymes, makith that the causes rennen and assemblen togidre.[36]

The virtue of prudence is exercised in understanding a greater and greater range of causes, in foreseeing a greater and greater range of consequences following from those causes, and in coming to a more perfect resemblance to divine providence, the ultimate model for prudence.[37] Lydgate's Fall of Princes shows time and again the fate of thralls to Fortune. Though even the prudent can be brought low by For-

[35] Boethius, Consolatio Philosophiae, ed. James J. O'Donnell, Bryn Mawr Latin Commentaries (Bryn Mawr: Thomas Library, 1984).

[36] Geoffrey Chaucer, Boece, ed. Ralph Hanna III and Traugott Lawler, The Riverside Chaucer 5.p1.89-97.

[37] Summa Theo. 1.Q22.A1; cf. Lydgate Fall of Princes 8.2384-92.

tune, they are generally more successful, at least until they are brought to the common end in death. Thus Lydgate recommends maintaining one's strength against Fortune by prudence, and maintaining one's prudence by counsel:

> Deth spareth nouther hih blood nor hih lynages,
> Hath mynde heeron for any reklesnesse;
> Transitoire been heer your pilgrymages,
> Set with brigauntis vnwarli you toppresse,
> But-yif prudence bi gret auysenesse
> With prouidence preserue your puissaunce
> Geyn worldli chaung & Fortunys variaunce.
> (Fall of Princes 6.1751-1757)

The mitigation of the effects of Fortune by prudence is a variation on the idea that one cannot come to virtue by luck or through good acts alone, but only with the thoughtful consideration of the causes and consequences of one's acts which makes them good. Prudence presupposes both the will and desire to be responsible for those acts.

The lesson in Chaucer's short poem "Fortune" is the Boethian lesson that if Fortune teaches anything it is that she is unreliable.

> Yit is me left the light of my resoun
> To knowen frend fro fo in thy mirour.
> So muchel hath yit thy whirling up and doun
> Ytaught me for to knowen in an hour.
> But trewely, no force of thy reddour
> To him that over himself hath the maystrye.
> My suffisaunce shal be my socour,
> For fynally Fortune, I thee defye.[38]

It is, no doubt, a bitter lesson learned only by those to whom Fortune has brought failure. The plaintiff against Fortune in this poem is less than entirely successful against Fortune, but he is aware, at least, that through the light of his reason, or his prudence, he could have the fortitude to be insulated against the rigors of Fortune.

[38] Chaucer, "Fortune," The Shorter Poems, ed. Laila Z. Gross, The Riverside Chaucer 9-16.

The virtue of prudence is represented in the tale not only by its association with, and opposition to, the idea of Fortune, but in other important ways, too. Structurally, both Chaucer's "Melibee" and Renaud's Livre de Mellibee et Prudence follow Albertanus's original despite the considerable excisions and substitutions made by Renaud.[39] Once the exemplum has been set, once Melibee has been consoled, and once the arguments about the ability of wives to give legitimate advice have been resolved, the tale unfolds as a dialogue on the nature and prudence of counsel. But at the end of the section corresponding to Albertanus's "De Laude Mulierum," Renaud has made his largest excision, omitting five complete chapters dealing specifically with prudence. We cannot guess why Renaud would cut material that seems so crucial to the exposition of the prudence of counsel, unless, perhaps, the material is represented in the "Melibee" in some other way.

The association of prudence with good counsel is as traditional as the division of prudence into three parts. As we have seen, Aristotle virtually equates prudence with good counsel, and, as we saw in the previous chapter, Thomas Aquinas considers counsel pars potentialis of prudence.[40] When Cicero divides virtue into four parts according the particular concerns of virtue, he insists that the essence of prudence is in the discovery of truth which is itself the very essence of

[39] Renaud de Louens's changes to Albertanus's book are detailed in J. Burke Severs, ed. and introd., "The Tale of Melibeus," Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, gen. eds. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1941) 560-614.

[40] Aristotle Ethics 6.9; Summa Theo. 2-2.Q51.

counsel:

> Velut ex ea parte, quae prima discripta est, in qua sapientiam et prudentiam ponimus, inest indagatio atque inventio veri, eiusque virtutis hoc munus est proprium. Ut enim quisque maxime perspicit, quid in re quaque verissimum sit, quique acutissime et celerrime potest et videre et explicare rationem, is prudentissimus et sapientissimus rite haberi solet.[41]

Martin of Braga, in a similar vein, states rather more baldly that

> Prudentis proprium est examinare consilia, et non cito facili credulitate ad falsa prolabi.[42]

Just as Martin begins his discourse on prudence by asserting its relationship to counsel, Prudence begins her counsel by discussing counsel itself.

Under the general heading "De Consilio," Albertanus, like Chaucer and Renaud after him, unfolds his argument carefully and logically. Prudence advises on avoiding anger, covetousness and haste in counsel, when counsel should be secret and when public, and from whom counsel should and should not be taken. The advice is familiar enough, yet one wonders whether Paull Baum could apply his pronouncement on the "falsity of its moralizing" here, unless Baum could also believe that Chaucer meant that good advice could or should be sought from fools, flatterers,

[41] Cicero, De Officiis, ed. Hubert Ashton Holden, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1899) 1.5.15-16. "As from this first assigned part of virtue, into which we put wisdom and prudence, belongs the investigation and discovery of truth, and this is the peculiar function of this part of virtue. The more clearly anyone perceives the essence of truth in a given case, and the more shrewdly and quickly he is able both to see and to express reasons for it, the more prudent and wise he is rightly held to be."

[42] Martin of Braga 25. "The particular feature of the prudent man is that he weighs counsels, and not too quickly, for it is easy to fall into falsehood through credulity."

drunkards and evil men.[43]

After advising Melibee to ask counsel of God, Prudence recommends that Melibee cleanse his own heart before taking counsel:

> And afterward thanne shul ye taken conseil in youreself, and examyne wel youre thoghtes of swich thyng as yow thynketh that is best for youre profit. And thanne shul ye dryve fro youre herte thre thynges that been contrariouse to good conseil; That is to seyn, ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse. (7.1120-22)

We can read "ire, coveitise and hastifnesse" as vices opposed to the Seven Gifts or as vices opposed to the cardinal virtues. As vices opposed to the Seven Gifts, "ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse" seem an odd choice. Certainly "ire" is directly opposed to scientia, and "coveitise" is directly opposed to consilium, but "hastifnesse" is only a species of the genus "ire" and only a venial part of "ire" by its opposition to patience. But as vices opposed to the cardinal virtues, all three are opposed to prudence as distinct vices.

Chaucer's Parson makes the connection between "ire" and "hastifnesse" as parts of the same venial sin:

> Now understondeth that wikked Ire is in two maneres; that is to seyn, sodeyn Ire or hastif Ire, withouten avisement and consentynge of resoun. The menyng and the sens of this is that the resoun of a man ne consente nat to thilke sodeyn Ire, and thanne is it venial. ("Parson" 10.541-542)

The Parson goes on to say that the second part of "wikked Ire," such as that which plans vengeance, is a deadly sin largely because it has the consent of the reason.[44] It is precisely this deadly sin that Melibee

[43] Baum 80.

[44] It might be useful to note here that Waterhouse and Griffiths (I 354) argue that Chaucer's ironic intentions are highlighted by the contrast between Prudence's initial counsel against ire and her own later anger with "Melibee." We would do well to recall the words of the Parson in this connection:

is in danger of committing for a good part of the tale. Paradoxically, the longer Prudence keeps him in counsel, the more consenting he will become, unless she can persuade him away from vengeance altogether. While the imprudence of persisting in deadly sin might be obvious, other commentators connect ire and imprudence more explicitly.

Thomas Aquinas's main discussion of ire argues that it is as a vice opposed to temperance. Hastiness is seen mainly as the vice of daring which is opposed to fortitude, and covetousness as a vice opposed to pietas which comes under justice.[45] But Thomas also discusses several vices which resemble prudence such as prudentia carnis, astutia, dolus, fraus and sollicitus in futurum.[46] All of these, he argues, arise from covetousness because they involve reasoning at some level, yet not for good ends, but for avaricious ends. Thomas elsewhere calls covetousness the root of all sins, and in this he agrees with Prudence's own recognition that "the Apostle seith that coveitise is roote of alle

---

> But ye shal understonde that Ire is in two maneres; that oon of hem is good, and that oother is wikked. The goode Ire is by jalousie of goodnesse, thurgh which a man is wrooth with wikkednesse and agayns wikkednesse; and therfore seith a wys man that ire is bet than pley. This Ire is with debonairetee, and it is wrooth withouten bitternesse; nat wrooth agayns the man, but wrooth with the mysdede of the man, as seith the prophete David, "Irascimini et nolite peccare." ("Parson" 10.538-540)

Thomas Aquinas concurs with this division, and he argues that anger is a passion that may be inordinate, or, when governed by reason, ordinate especially when anger is useful as a corrective of vice (Summa Theo. Q158.A1).

[45] Summa Theo. 2-2.Qq158, 127, 118.

[46] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q56. Prudence of the flesh, craftiness, guile, fraud and anxiety about the future.

harmes" (7.1130).[47]

Like the Parson, Thomas links ire and hastiness, but particularly as related sins of imprudence—ira habet subitum motum: unde praecipitanter agit et absque consilio—but hastiness itself is specially distinguished as a sin included in imprudence. We will recall the logical steps taken in prudence and counsel:

> Summum autem animae est ipsa ratio. Imum autem est operatio per corpus exercita. Gradus autem medii, per quos oportet ordinate descendere, sunt memoria praeteritorum, intelligentia praesentium, solertia in considerandis futuris eventibus, ratiocinatio conferens unum alteri, docilitas, per quam aliquis acquiescit sententiis maiorum.

It is obviously impossible to descend through these steps in any haste:

> Per quos quidem gradus aliquis ordinate descendit recte consiliando. Si quis autem feratur ad agendum per impetum voluntatis vel passionis, pertransitis huiusmodi gradibus, erit praeciptatio. Cum ergo inordinatio consilii ad imprudentiam pertineat, manifestum est quod vitium praecipitationis sub imprudentia continetur.[48]

Counsel becomes inordinate when the proper steps, first to prudence, and then to proper counsel, are not taken, or when they are taken too

[47] Summa Theo. 1-2.Q84.A1. Prudence and Thomas both quote 1 Tim. 6.10. in support of their argument.

[48] Summa Theo. Q55.A8. "Anger has sudden motion whence it tends precipitately and away from counsel."
Q53.A3. "The summit of the spirit is reason itself. The lowest part is by the operation exercised through the body. The middle gradations, through which it is necessary to descend most ordinately, are memory of the past, intelligence of the present and shrewdness in considering future events, calm reasoning opposing the one thing and the other, willingness to learn, through which the opinions of older men are acquired."
Q53.A3. "Whoever takes counsel descends through these steps most ordinately. If someone takes up action through a willful impulse or a passion, skipping past these steps, it should be called precipitation. Since inordinate counsel therefore pertains to imprudence, it is manifest that the vice of precipitation is contained in imprudence."

hastily and out of due order. The integral relationship of prudence and counsel makes precipitation a sin pertaining to both.

The philosophical background to the terms "ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse" should enrich our understanding of Prudence's subsequent explanations. Unless one eschews "ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse" in counsel, one "may nat wel deme":

> He that is irous and wrooth, he ne may nat wel deme; and he that may nat wel deme, may nat wel conseille. . . . And eek, sire, ye moste dryve coveitise out of youre herte. For the Apostle seith that coveitise is roote of alle harmes. And trust wel that a coveitous man ne kan noght deme ne thynke, but oonly to fulfille the ende of his coveitise. . . . And, sire, ye moste also dryve out of youre herte hastifnesse; for certes, ye ne may nat deeme for the beste by a sodeyn thought that falleth in youre herte, but ye moste avyse yow on it ful ofte.
> (7.1125-1134)

Good judgment, σύνεσις in Aristotle and synesis in Thomas, is an essential element of good counsel and, by extension, of any prudent action.

Once the heart has been cleansed, and once counsel has been taken inwardly and kept secret, it is necessary to determine who should be consulted for further advice. Prudence counsels Melibee to look to his true friends and to those who are wise because of their years and to avoid flatterers, drunkards and such. Prudence then counsels Melibee in the proper examination of counsel and counselors, and she offers advice "after the doctrine of Tullius" from De Officiis:

> Una est in perspiciendo quid in quaque re verum sincerumque sit, quid consentaneum cuique, quid consequens, ex quo quaeque gignatur, quae cuiusque rei causa sit.[49]

[49] De Offic. 2.5.18. "The first is in the perception of what is true and pure, what is proper and fit and for whom, what consequences follow, from whence a matter is engendered, and what are its causes." Cicero makes only this barest statement of this advice in the course of describing three virtues (corresponding to prudence, temperance and justice) necessary for co-operation among men. Albertanus, the ultimate source of the "Tale of Melibee," paraphrases Cicero and glosses the

Cicero's advice is not translated directly, of course, but appears in a considerably expanded form—a gloss and an application, if you will. In the first instance, Prudence requires that present circumstances be understood and explicated accurately:

> In the examynynge thanne of youre conseillour ye shul considere manye thynges. Alderfirst thou shalt considere that in thilke thyng that thou purposest, and upon what thyng thou wolt have conseil, that verray trouthe be seyd and conserved; this is to seyn, telle trewely thy tale. For he that seith fals may nat wel be conseilled in that cas of which he lieth. (7.1202-1204)

A counselor obviously cannot give good counsel or make sound judgments unless he has an accurate understanding of the situation at hand. In the same vein, Prudence requires that relevant factors affecting present circumstances should be understood:

> And after this thou shalt considere the thynges that acorden to that thou purposest for to do by thy conseillours, if resoun accorde therto, and eek if thy myght may atteine therto, and if the moore part and the bettre part of thy conseillours acorde therto, or noon. (7.1205-1206)

Naturally, if one has chosen wise counselors, the truth of a matter can be known by the accord among them, but, secondly, consideration should also be given to the consequences of all proposed courses of action, that consequences should be foreseen:

> Thanne shaltou considere what thyng shal folwe of that conseillyng, as hate, pees, werre, grace, profit, or damage,

---

advice in pretty much the same form as we have it from Renaud and Chaucer. Albertanus of Brescia, Liber Consolationis et Consilii ex Quo Hausta est Fabula Gallica De Melibeo et Prudentia, ed. Thor Sundby, Chaucer Society Second Series 8 (London: N. Trübner, for the Chaucer Society, 1873) 35.77. Interestingly, Cicero's description of prudence in this instance precedes an argument in favour of virtuous co-operation as an alternative to trust in fortune. See also the discussion of "warnestooring of towers" (p. 53 n. 25), and the discussion of prudence vs. fortune (pp. 59-61), above.

> and manye othere thynges. And in alle thise thynges thou shalt chese the beste and weyve alle othere thynges. (7.1207-1208)

By foreseeing consequences, one is able to choose the best among possible courses of action. But the causes of present circumstances, and the normal results of these causes, should also be understood:

> Thanne shaltow considere of what roote is engendred the matiere of thy conseil, and what fruyt it may conceyve and engendre. Thou shalt eek considere alle thise causes, fro whennes they been sprongen. (7.1209-1210)

Prudence's advice on the examination of counsel and counselors should be recognized immediately as the familiar pattern of the three parts of prudence: the understanding of circumstances, the foreseeing of consequences, and the memory of causes—memoria, intelligentia and providentia—which we saw previously in De Inventione.

Even while Prudence asserts the most traditional forms of prudence as a theoretical moral virtue, she still insists on the enactment of prudence as a practical virtue. The value of prudence in human affairs is not simply in understanding its complex relationships to various concepts and subdivisions of virtue, but also in a concrete understanding of what must be done and how it should be done. A theoretical understanding of virtue is absolutely necessary if our actions are to be good, but such an understanding is useless unless we can apply it. It does not require a great leap of intellect to apply Prudence's explication of the three parts of prudence as a guideline for behavior in a given situation. It is a matter of asking ourselves some basic questions about the causes of the present situation, the definition and attainability of goals, and the likely consequences that follow from various proposed courses of action. The facility and accuracy with which we ask and answer such questions is a matter of practice.

Prudence begins her counsel by offering practical advice even before Melibee formally agrees that she should be his counselor:

> "Lat calle," quod Prudence, "thy trewe freendes alle and thy lynage whiche that been wise. Telleth youre cas, and herkneth what they seye in conseillyng, and yow governe after hire sentence. Salomon seith, 'Werk alle thy thynges by conseil, and thou shalt never repente.'" (7.1002-1003)

Although Prudence has explicitly recommended that only "trewe freendes" and wise relatives be called as counselors, Melibee admits others to his counsel who were not recommended:

> Thanne, by the conseil of his wyf Prudence, this Melibeus leet callen a greet congregacion of folk, as surgiens, phisiciens, olde folk and yonge, and somme of his olde enemys reconsiled as by hir semblaunt to his love and into his grace; and therwithal ther coomen somme of his neighebores that diden hym reverence moore for drede than for love, as it happeth ofte. Ther coomen also ful many subtille flatereres, and wise advocatz lerned in the lawe. (7.1004-1007)

Waterhouse and Griffiths are quite right in asserting that Melibee has been unwise in his selection of counselors, but because he acts on Prudence's counsel does not mean he has understood her counsel nor that he has acted on it properly. Because he has acted unwisely, it does not mean that the lack of wisdom can thus be imputed to Prudence.[50]

Prudence's later dissection of Melibee's misapplication of her advice is also eminently practical. Her analysis of Melibee's first counsel is quite precise and detailed as the following examples show:

[50] Waterhouse and Griffiths I 354-56. Waterhouse and Griffiths suggest that Prudence herself is unwise, and her counsels suspect, since Melibee has himself acted unwisely on her counsel. Naturally, if he had not misunderstood, there would be little justification for the tale which follows, and it would not have been nearly so dramatic if we had only an exemplary tale in which Melibee simply eschewed his bad counsellors in favour of the wise. We can only caution that the demands of the narrative not be understood necessarily as flaws in its characters.

> First and forward, ye han erred in th'assemblynge of youre conseillours. For ye sholde first have cleped a fewe folk to youre conseil, and after ye myghte han shewed it to mo folk, if it hadde been nede. But certes, ye han sodeynly cleped to youre conseil a greet multitude of peple, ful chargeant and ful anoyous for to heere. (7.1241-43)

By recommending only "trewe freendes," Prudence has also only recommended a small counsel:

> And sith ye woot wel that men shal alwey fynde a gretter nombre of fooles than of wise men, and therfore the conseils that been at congregaciouns and multitudes of folk, there as men take moore reward to the nombre than to the sapience of persones, ye se wel that in swiche conseillynges fooles han the maistrie. (7.1258-60)

Some of the people explicitly recommended by Prudence may appear in the listing of the "greet congregacion of folk," but there are some, such as the "olde enemys reconsiled" and the "subtille flatereres," who signal to us, even without Prudence's later correction, that Melibee has quite plainly acted unwisely:

> Also ye han erred, for theras ye sholden oonly have cleped to youre conseil youre trewe frendes olde and wise, ye han ycleped straunge folk, yonge folk, false flatereres, and enemys reconsiled, and folk that doon yow reverence withouten love. (7.1244-45)

Besides adding more people than Prudence recommends, Melibee also betrays more to his counselors than he should:

> And whan this folk togidre assembled weren, this Melibeus in sorweful wise shewed hem his cas. And by the manere of his speche it semed that in herte he baar a crueel ire, redy to doon vengeaunce upon his foes, and sodeynly desired that the werre sholde bigynne; but nathelees, yet axed he hire conseil upon this matiere. (7.1008-1010)

Here, Melibee seems to begin his counsel well enough. He is solemn and grave, "in sorweful wise," and he "shewed hem his cas" as Prudence directed. But he betrays his desires through his anger, and he announces "sodeynely" that he desires war more than anything. Two

errors are thus indicated:

> Ye han erred also, for ye han shewed to youre conseillours youre talent and youre affeccioun to make werre anon and for to do vengeance. They han espied by youre wordes to what thyng ye been enclyned; and therfore han they rather conseilled yow to youre talent that to youre profit. (7.1249-51)

> And eek also ye have erred, for ye han broght with yow to youre conseil ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse, the whiche thre thinges been contrariouse to every conseil honest and profitable; the whiche thre thinges ye han nat anientissed or destroyed hem, neither in youreself, ne in youre conseillours, as yow oghte. (7.1246-48)

The obvious danger for any ruler is the number of flatterers who will surround him and pander to his apparent desires, his "talent," rather than to what is most needed: Melibee's "ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse" betray his desires.

The quality and extent of Melibee's errors indicates that he begins the tale with less than a fully informed sense of what constitutes prudent action. Melibee has been given the germs of good counsel in his first counsel, and, if he understood it properly, he would not need the efforts of Prudence in bringing him to understanding. But that is the point of the tale: Prudence must bring Melibee to an understanding of his situation and its best resolution just as, allegorically, she must bring all people to understanding. If, as some claim, she merely harangues and brow-beats Melibee into acquiescing to her advice, it is not Melibee who becomes prudent, but Prudence who merely has her will and nothing else.

The critics who claim that Prudence brow-beats Melibee with trite and stupid advice into a morally false position cannot adduce examples of falsity that do not utterly strain credulity. Prudence herself consistently counsels thoughtful deliberation instead of rash action, seek-

ing advice from the wise instead of from the foolish or evil, peace instead of war, reconciliation instead of vengeance, working by prudence instead of trusting in Fortune, the love of the people as a stronger defence than the terror of arms, clemency instead of cruelty. Prudence leads Melibee down the subtle gradations of counsel from the general concept of counsel to the actions he must take to enact it, from the summum animae to the operatio per corpus exercita.[51] Rather than "dull and moralizing" she is precise and thorough.

But Chaucer is not content with allowing Prudence to leave matters there. Chaucer's most significant deviation from both Renaud and Albertanus comes at the end of the tale in Melibee's last speech where Chaucer adds a long and elegant sentence on mercy and the forgiveness of sin:

> Al be it so that of youre pride and heigh presumpcioun and folie, and of youre necligence and unkonnynge, ye have mysborn yow and trespassed unto me, yet for as muche as I see and biholde youre grete humylitee and that ye been sory and repentant of youre giltes, it constreyneth me to doon yow grace and mercy. wherfore I receyve yow to my grace and foryeve yow outrely alle the offenses, injuries, and wronges that ye have doon agayn me and myne, to this effect and to this ende that God of his endelees mercy wole at the tyme of oure diynge foryeven us oure giltes that we han trespassed to hym in this wrecched world. For doutelees, if we be sory and repentant of the synnes and giltes which we han trespassed in the sighte of oure Lord God, he is so free and so merciable that he wole foryeven us oure giltes and bryngen us to the blisse that nevere hath ende. Amen. (7.1876-88)

With this speech, Melibee receives the fifth Gift of the Holy Spirit, consilium: its virtue is mercy, and its beatitude, the fifth from the Sermon on the Mount, is "beati misericordes, quia ipsi misericordium

[51] See p. 66 n. 48 above.

consequentur."[52] Through mercy comes the forgiveness of each other, and of ourselves by Christ, which stands at the heart of Christ's teaching. It is through counsel that Melibee comes full circle and reaches a new summum animae, and it is by forgiving his corporeal enemies that Melibee deals the most crushing defeat to the three spiritual enemies of mankind.

We may go right back to the beginning, to Aristotle, to remind ourselves of the essential conditions of prudence as a moral virtue:

> ὁ γὰρ ἀκρατὴς καὶ ὁ φαῦλος ὃ προτίθεται δεῖν ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ τεύξεται, ὥστε ὀρθῶς ἕξαι βεβουλευμένος, κακὸν δὲ μέγα εἰληφώς· δοκεῖ δ' ἀγαθόν τι εἶναι τὸ εὖ βεβουλεῦσθαι. ἡ ἄρα τοιαύτη ὀρθότης βουλῆς εὐβουλία, ἡ ἀγαθοῦ τευκτική.[53]

Not only must one arrive at a good end in deliberation, but one must reach that end by the correct means. If Prudence arrives at the right conclusion by the wrong means, she has failed as a fully moral being. But both the quality and content of her advice must suggest to us that she has arrived at a good end by good means. We can illustrate this point by concluding with examples of failed counsel.

Both the "Merchant's Tale" and the "Nun's Priest's Tale" have counselling scenes in which neither of their protagonists is able, for various reasons, to get good counsel. The "Clerk's Tale" also opens with a counselling scene which is much more satisfactory from the stand-

[52] Matt. 5.7. "The merciful are of the blessed because, truly, mercy will follow them."

[53] Ethics 6.9.4. "A man of deficient self-restraint or a bad man may as a result of calculation arrive at the object he proposes as the right thing to do, so that he will have deliberated correctly, although he will have gained something evil; whereas to have deliberated well is felt to be a good thing, namely being correct in the sense of arriving at something good."

point of good counsel. The terrible wrongs and cruelties that Walter later inflicts on Griselda are another matter, having, perhaps, less to do with counsel than the absence of counsel.

The critical division over the "Merchant's Tale" is even sharper than over the "Melibee," but we can agree that January is portrayed as a fool without having to enter into the nature of the division between critics and the relative bitterness that various commentators see in the tale.[54] Indeed, the opening lines call him a fool and question immediately whether he wants to marry "for hoolynesse or for dotage." Whatever we may think of the teller of the tale, January's folly becomes increasingly evident as the tale progresses, reaching its zenith beneath the pear tree. What seems less evident to critics is January's imprudence.

One of the clearest marks of January's folly and imprudence is the quality of the counsel he receives and accepts. Neither of his two friends, Placebo and Justinus, gives him sufficient counsel or sufficiently good counsel. Placebo is an obvious flatterer who counsels January not to take counsel at all:

> Placebo seyde, "O Januarie, brother,
> Ful litel nede hadde ye, my lord so deere,
> Conseil to axe of any that is heere,
> But that ye been so ful of sapience
> That yow ne liketh, for youre heighe prudence,

[54] Critical opinion of the Merchant's tale is sharply divided over the general tenor and mood of the tale. Some see it as an extremely dark and bitter satire, while other see it as jolly bawdry. For the dark and bitter, see, for example, Emerson Brown, Jr., "Chaucer, the Merchant, and Their Tale: Getting Beyond Old Controversies, Part I," Chaucer Review 13 (1978): 141-56; Emerson Brown, Jr., "Chaucer, the Merchant, and Their Tale: Getting Beyond Old Controversies, Part II," Chaucer Review, 13 (1979): 247-62; and, for jolly bawdry, see, Martin Stevens, "And Venus Laugheth: An Interpretation of the 'Merchant's Tale,'" Chaucer Review, 7 (1972): 118-31.

> To weyven fro the word of Salomon.
> This word seyde he unto us everychon:
> 'Wirk alle thyng by conseil,' thus seyde he,
> 'And thanne shaltow nat repente thee.'
> But though that Salomon spak swich a word,
> Myn owene deere brother and my lord,
> So wysly God my soule brynge at reste,
> I holde youre owene conseil is the beste."
> (4.1478-90)

Prudence, when she is arguing with Melibee about whether wives can properly counsel their husbands, argues that a lord should not be afraid to take counsel from a social inferior:

> Ye seyn that if ye governe yow by my conseil, it sholde seme that ye hadde yeve me the maistrie and the lordshipe over youre persone. Sire, save youre grace, it is nat so. For if it so were that no man sholde be conseilled but oonly of hem that hadden lordshipe and maistrie of his persone, men wolden nat be conseilled so ofte. For soothly thilke man that asketh conseil of a purpos, yet hath he free choys wheither he wole werke by that conseil or noon. (7.1081-83)

The argument works in both directions: a lord should not fear to take counsel from an inferior, but neither should an inferior be barred from offering counsel to a lord. Prudence also later argues, of course, that we should not take counsel from those who fear us, but this injunction applies particularly to servants and not to social inferiors. It is not at all clear that Placebo has been a servant to everyone he has had the opportunity to counsel. Nevertheless, he holds it as a general principle not to give counsel to his betters:

> For, brother myn, of me taak this motyf,
> I have now been a court-man al my lyf,
> And God it woot, though I unworthy be,
> I have stonden in ful greet degree
> Abouten lordes of ful heigh estaat;
> Yet hadde I nevere with noon of hem debaat.
> I nevere hem contraried, trewely;
> I woot wel that my lord kan moore than I. (4.1491-98)

January ultimately accepts this counsel of no-counsel and shows himself imprudent in two ways. First, he accepts the counsel of a flatterer,

and, in doing so, he accepts that he does not need counsel at all.

Justinus' counsel, though it begins better than Placebo's, does not ultimately fare any better as good counsel. Justinus begins by asking January to take the estate and morals of his bride-to-be into consideration. Whatever our modern preoccupations with sentimentality in marriage, it is perfectly reasonable for a medieval man of position and property to want to know these things before he agrees to a marriage:

> Senek, amonges othere wordes wyse,
> Seith that a man oghte hym right wel avyse
> To whom he yeveth his lond or his catel.
> And syn I oghte avyse me right wel
> To whom I yeve my good awey from me,
> Wel muchel moore I oghte avysed be
> To whom I yeve my body for alwey.
> I warne yow wel, it is no childes pley
> To take a wyf withouten avysement.
> Men moste enquere—this is myn assent—
> Wher she be wys, or sobre, or dronkelewe,
> Or proud, or elles ootherweys a shrewe,
> A chidestere, or wastour of thy good,
> Or riche, or poore, or elles mannyssh wood. (4.1523-36)

Quite properly, Justinus asks for "leyser" to give sufficient time for deliberation. But Justinus seems incapable of sticking to the point which is to counsel January in how to make a good marriage. Marriage is not inherently a bad or unreasonable goal, especially given that the race must be propagated, but Justinus, by showing him the bad example of his own marriage, ultimately aims to counsel January against marriage altogether:

> For, God it woot, I have wept many a teere
> Ful pryvely, syn I have had a wyf.
> Preyse whoso wole a wedded mannes lyf,
> Certein I fynde in it but cost and care
> And observances, of alle blisses bare.
> And yet, God woot, my neighebores aboute,
> And namely of wommen many a route,
> Seyn that I have the mooste stedefast wyf,
> And eek the mekeste oon that bereth lyf;

But I woot best where wryngeth me my sho. (4.1544-53)

Even when Justinus reasonably counsels January to beware of the dangers of a marriage to a young wife, he concludes by telling January to do as he pleases and expresses the hope that everything turns out right:

> Ye mowe, for me, right as yow liketh do;
> Avyseth yow—ye been a man of age—
> How that ye entren into mariage,
> And namely with a yong wyf and a fair.
> By hym that made water, erthe, and air,
> The yongeste man that is in al this route
> Is bisy ynough to bryngen it aboute
> To han his wyf allone. Trusteth me,
> Ye shul nat plesen hire fully yeres thre—
> This is to seyn, to doon hire ful plesaunce.
> A wyf axeth ful many an observaunce.
> I prey yow that ye be nat yvele apayd. (4.1554-65)

Justinus, who initially appears to be a good counselor, as much as advises, in the end, that January place his trust in Fortune. Justinus makes this feeble offering before January rejects him outright as counselor, and he has little excuse for not giving January pointed and forthright counsel. January has good reason to eschew such insipid advice, but he does so for the wrong reason:

> "Wel," quod this Januarie, "and hastow ysayd?
> Straw for thy Senek, and for thy proverbes!
> I counte nat a panyer ful of herbes
> Of scole-termes. Wyser men than thow,
> As thou hast herd, assenteden right now
> To my purpos." (4.1566-71)

January rejects the advice not because its conclusion is insipid and wrong-headed, but because it is "philosophical" in a vague sort of way. We see January prepared to reject wisdom and learning because it does not accord with his cupidities. We also see the depth of January's susceptibility to flattery when we realize that the "wyser men" than Justinus means none other than Placebo. Prudence, we may be sure, would

advise January to find new counselors: even between them, there is not enough to synthesize anything like a reasonably good counsel.

The question of counsel in the "Nun's Priest's Tale" need not be subject to the critical complications about the Nun's Priest's own actual opinion about the relative importance of free will and fate. His perversely humorous and deliberate misdirections have their own pleasures, but they are not necessary to our view of counsel. On the one hand, because he is bewailing Chauntecleer's failure to heed the dream of the fox, he seems to suggest that the dream should have provided Chauntecleer with some kind of foresight that could be acted upon. But, without taking a breath, the Nun's Priest asserts that Chauntecleer is fated anyway:

> O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe
> That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes!
> Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes
> That thilke day was perilous to thee;
> But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee,
> After the opinioun of certein clerkis. (7.3230-35)

The Nun's Priest describes the various views of fate and free will with a perceptive and accurate understanding, but he confesses that he cannot really tell the good kernels of the argument from the chaff: "But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren" (7.3240). The Nun's Priest's view does affect whether we think Chauntecleer could reasonably have done anything to evade capture by the fox. If Chauntecleer was fated from the start, it makes no difference whether he foresaw his capture. But, if Chauntecleer was not constrained by necessity and had the free will to make the choice of listening to the fox's blandishments or not, he should not have fallen into the situation from which, granted, he was later able to escape.

But the Nun's Priest's feigned confusion is not the only way of understanding Chauntecleer's situation. The Nun's Priest's view about the relationship between free will and fate could be informed, as should our own, by the recent telling of the "Tale of Melibee."[55] If we accept Prudence's instruction as part of a tradition of common wisdom, we must necessarily accept that Chauntecleer was capable of avoiding his difficulties with the fox because he had a certain knowledge that some unknown creature would come and would try to harm him, a knowledge upon which he could act.

That certain knowledge comes, of course, from a prophetic dream. The question of the truth or falsity of dreams as divination also need not be discussed here in any depth. Whether the dream of the fox was visum as Pertelote asserts, or whether is was visio as Chauntecleer maintains, the important question is that Chauntecleer is certain that the dream is prophetic, and it is later proven to be prophetic.[56] It is plain that he believes himself in the possession of certain knowledge about the future even if the exact nature of that knowledge, the nature of foxes, is unclear.

We should, finally, be cautious, though not dismissive, in our understanding of the Nun's Priest's assertion that Chauntecleer gets himself into trouble because he followed the counsels of a woman:

[55] Both the "Melibee" and the "Nun's Priest" are in the same fragment in virtually all manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales.

[56] Macrobius Som. Scip. 1.3.2-4. The dream terminology is from Macrobius who describes five kinds of dreams: enigmatic (somnium, ὄνειρος), prophetic (visio, ὅραμα), oracular (oraculum, χρηματισμός), nightmare (insomnium, ἐνύπνιον) and apparition (visum, φάντασμα). Dreams caused by overeating or day-to-day anxieties can be either insomnium or visum.

My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,
That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
That he hadde met that dreem that I yow tolde.
Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;
Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo,
And made Adam fro Paradys to go,
Ther as he was ful myrie and wel at ese.
But for I noot to whom it myght displese,
If I conseil of wommen wolde blame,
Passe over, for I seyde it in my game. (7.3252-62)

The Nun's Priest gives it away at the end, of course: it is all part of a game, but a curiously earnest game, nonetheless. Chauntecleer does take counsel from his wife, but in an unexpected fashion. It is a counsel that brings him into serious danger.

In the counselling scene that forms the bulk of the opening of the tale, Chauntecleer not only rejects Pertelote's advice to fill himself with laxatives and emetics, he crushes it under a considerable weight of learning. But he also means to mock Pertelote with his learning when he mistranslates his "In principio":

Now let us speke of myrthe, and stynte al this.
Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
Of o thyng God hath sent me large grace;
For whan I se the beautee of youre face,
Ye been so scarlet reed aboute youre yen,
It maketh al my drede for to dyen;
For al so siker as In principio,
Mulier est hominis confusio—
Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,
"Womman is mannes joye and al his blis." (7.3157-3166)[57]

But Pertelote's advice has been inappropriate to the situation, and it falls before Chauntecleer's mockery and learning. Chauntecleer's learning, in its turn, falls before his appetites. The grace that God has shown Chauntecleer is no longer in his learning but in Pertelote's

[57] The words actually mean "from the beginning, woman is the confusion of man."

beauty. His own certainty of the truth of his dream as prophecy might have been counsel enough, but he is, finally, more interested in a kind of counsel of the flesh:

> For whan I feele a-nyght your softe syde—
> Al be it that I may nat on yow ryde,
> For that oure perche is maad so narwe, allas—
> I am so ful of joye and of solas,
> That I diffye bothe sweven and dreem. (7.3167-71)

While we cannot be certain that Chauntecleer's sexual behavior as a rooster is intemperate, we can propose that, as a fable of man, his willingness to give up certain knowledge for the pleasure of the moment is a sure mark of his imprudence. As Thomas Aquinas says,

> Prudentia est circa ea quae sunt ad finem totius vitae. Et ideo prudentia carnis proprie dicitur secundum quod aliquis bona carnis habet ut ultimum finem suae vitae.[58]

Thomas understands prudence of the flesh to be a disordering of a man's proper ends in life. By substituting his pleasure for knowledge of imminent danger, Chauntecleer makes a clear and dangerous choice in favour of prudence of the flesh, and he puts his moral life in jeopardy.

Counsel in the tale becomes a suspension of counsel as it did in the "Merchant's Tale." But unlike the "Merchant's Tale," the character in most need of counsel does not eschew counsel because it is learned, but because he uses his learning as a weapon to crush his opponent. He forgets the best use to which his learning can be put which is to use it to counsel himself.

[58] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q55.A1. "Prudence is about those things which concern the whole of a life. The idea of prudence of the flesh is properly said to follow the prudence of someone who has the good of the flesh as the ultimate goal of his life."

Melibee, January and Chauntecleer all begin their tales in dire need of good counsel. In each case, they have needed a domestic prudence to order the affairs of their households, but Melibee especially has needed a political prudence to order his relations with the world around him. January and Chauntecleer fail to obtain the good counsel that is essential for them to act prudently, but Melibee does not fail. He exists, perhaps, as a unique model of the efficacy of prudence in practical affairs. Fools and their follies abound in the Canterbury Tales, so that one is left wondering whether the theme of prudence is not more generalized in the Tales than has been suggested in the few short examples given here. But having seen that the theme is common in Chaucer, we can turn now to Troilus and Criseyde in order to understand how disastrous and tragic the effects of bad counsel and imprudence can be.

III

"Prudence, allas, oon of thyne eyen thre me lakked alwey": Imprudence and the Fall of Troilus and Criseyde

Where the virtue of prudence is the primary theme of the "Melibee," in Troilus and Criseyde it inheres not only in the poem's structure, but also in the audience's historical understanding of the events of the Trojan War, which will here be called the poem's metastructure, and it is a paradigm for judging the characters, their relationships and their actions. Prudence is not a theme in Troilus and Criseyde the way that it might be in Gower, Hoccleve or Lydgate. Chaucer does not list virtues and their attributes, and he makes no lengthy comparisons between the behaviour of characters and ideals of virtue. Nevertheless, the audience is called upon to judge the poem's characters, not only in the light of their actions and their relationships, but also in the light of the history of their city.[1]

The history of the city of Troy and its war were not only well known to Chaucer's audience, but the stories about it had been retold almost continuously from ancient times. So extraordinarily pervasive did the central story become in late medieval Europe that there was hardly a race in Western Europe that did not claim to have been founded by a descendant of Trojan survivors of the war.[2] Even the most casual

[1] The germ of the argument that follows comes from a provocative suggestion in Susan Schibanoff, "Prudence and Artificial Memory in Chaucer's Troilus" ELH 42 (1975): 507-17. Schibanoff suggests that our knowledge of the Trojan past, the poem's "present," and its announcements of its own outcome corresponds to the three-part structure of prudence.

[2] See, for example, Hugh A. MacDougall, Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons (Montreal: Harvest House; Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1982).

allusions to Troy, by authors of all kinds, are expected to be understood without explanation. Every person of even the most modest education knew the general outlines of the story, knew the causes and outcome of the war, and knew the names of its prominent heroes and their family relationships. The events of the story were recounted in moral allegories, in dream allegories, in romances, in histories, in mythologies, within exegetical treatises and scholastic disputes, indeed, in every imaginable literary form.[3]

When the narrator of Troilus and Criseyde introduces the history of the Trojan war with only one stanza, it is not because he considers the external events of the war unimportant or ancillary to his tale, but because he genuinely expects that his audience will understand immediately and fully when and where his tale is set. Given his cultural background, he can afford to be brief:

> Yt is wel wist how that the Grekes stronge
> In armes with a thousand shippes wente
> To Troiewardes, and the cite longe
> Assegeden, neigh ten yer er they stente,
> And in diverse wise and oon entente,
> The ravysshyng to wreken of Eleyne,
> By Paris don, they wroughten al hir peyne. (1.57-63)

The astoundingly rich and complex cultural phenomenon represented by the entire tradition of the story of Troy forms a metastructure to Chaucer's poem. As the private drama of Criseyde and Troilus unfolds, the audience is aware that outside the city walls Dictys Cretensis is

[3] For example John Ridewall's Fulgentius metaforalis, Jean Froissart's Espinette amoureuse, Benoît de Sainte-Maure's Roman de Troie, Guido de Colonna's Historia Troiana, the Vatican Mythographies, and Augustine's De Civitate Dei.

recording the events of the greater struggle, while within the walls, Dares Phrygii is performing the same task:

> But how this town com to destruccion
> Ne falleth naught to purpos me to telle,
> For it were here a long digression
> Fro my matere, and yow to long to dwelle.
> But the Troian gestes, and they felle,
> In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite,
> Whoso that kan may rede hem as they write. (1.141-47)

The audience, like the Gawain-Poet, is also aware that, when the war ends, the Trojan survivors will be scattered over the world, and that one day Brutus will wander into the Thames estuary and found a permanent settlement:

> Fro riche Romulus to Rome rycchis hym swyþe,
> With gret bobbaunce þat burȝe he biges vpon fyrst,
> And neuenes hit his aune nome, as hit now hat;
> Tirius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes,
> Langaberde in Lumbardie lyftes up homes;
> And fer ouer þe French flod Felix Brutus
> On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settez
> with wynne.[4]

The history of the Trojan war is the audience's own history. No event takes place in Troilus and Criseyde that does not ultimately resonate with the tradition.

Naturally, the war itself cannot help but intrude into the story, so that some of the resonances are made obvious. Without the war, Calchas's treason is meaningless, and without his treason, there is no impediment to the love of Troilus and Criseyde. The accidental inclusion of Antenor in Pandarus's machinations has terrible consequences for the life of the whole city, and, without the war, those consequences would not be so grave. The parliament scene in Book IV would not take

[4] J. R. R. Tolkien, and E. V. Gordon, ed., Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford UP, 1968) 8-15.

place without the war. Troilus's reputation would be considerably different without the war, and his peculiar risk-taking would find rather a different outlet.

Each critical juncture in the overall history of Troy is marked by some extraordinarily imprudent act, as we can see from Robert Graves's summary of various Greek, Latin and medieval versions of the history.[5] The story of Troy begins with Dardanus marrying into the family of Teucer, the Phrygian king, and inheriting the kingdom after Teucer's death. Dardanus wanted to build a city on the hill of Ate but was warned by an oracle that misfortune would always follow the inhabitants of any town built there. So Dardanus built his city of Dardania on Ate's lower slopes.

Despite the oracle, Dardanus's second son Ilus finally did build a city on Ate, calling it alternately "Illium" or "Troy," the latter after his nephew Tros, who inherited the bulk of Phrygia from Erichthonius, Dardanus's eldest son.[6] But Ilus chose not to fortify his new city in the hope that he might thus avoid the curse. It was at this time that the statue of Pallas Athena, called the Palladium, was received, and it was supposed to preserve the city for as long as it was in the Trojans' possession.

Ilus's son, Laomedon, finally arranged the building of the city walls, and he obtained the services of Poseidon and Apollo who were then

[5] Robert Graves, The Greek Myths (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960) 158.c-1.

[6] Dictys, A Journal of The Trojan War, in The Trojan War: The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian, trans. R. M. Frazer, Jr. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1966) 102 [further references to "Dares" and "Dictys" are to this translation]. Dictys says Tros was the son of Erichthonius and the father of Laomedon.

being punished by Zeus. Laomedon then decided not to pay the gods for their labours and, shortly thereafter, Heracles, to avenge a previous insult to the Argonauts, laid waste to the city and killed Laomedon and all his sons except Priam. Chaucer was not unaware of these kinds of details:

> For certein, Phebus and Neptunus bothe,
> That makeden the walles of the town,
> Ben with the folk of Troie alwey so wrothe
> That they wol brynge it to confusioun,
> Right in despit of kyng Lameadoun;
> Bycause he nolde payen hem here hire,
> The town of Troie shal ben set on-fire. (4.120-126)

Priam sent to the oracle at Delphi to determine whether the city had been destroyed because of its cursed site or because of the insult to the gods. But the unnamed nephew who went to Delphi fell in love with Apollo's priest and returned to Troy without fulfilling his commission. Priam was ashamed to approach the oracle again, and he rebuilt the city on its original site.

At least three generations of Trojan kings knew that something was wrong with their city: they knew that if they built their city on Ate, they would suffer for it. The fundamental misconception of Troy was compounded by Laomedon's decision to cheat the gods who built the walls for him. Of these three kings, only Priam decided to examine the matter more closely, but he gave up his investigation after one abortive attempt. Despite their knowledge, these kings persisted in building and re-building their city knowing that it was cursed. Not surprisingly, the judgment of these kings was suspect: Dictys describes Antenor's speech before the assembled Greeks, a speech in which he decries the

perennial imprudence of the Trojan kings. Dictys reports that "in a long speech, Antenor told how the gods were always punishing the Trojans for ill-considered acts."[7]

The tensions that lead to the Trojan War begin when Heracles awards Priam's sister, Hesione, to Telamon for his help in ravaging Troy. A fourteenth-century English redactor of Guido de Colonna's twelfth-century Historia Troiana shows Priam in haste and anger to wreak revenge on the Greeks who refused his embassy to have Hesione returned. The redactor asks whether Priam has remembered the proverbs about vengeance:

> "He þat girdis with grete yre his grem for to venge,
> Ofte shapis hym to shotte into shame ferre,
> With hoge harmes to haue, & his hert sarre."
> Hit is siker, for sothe, and a sagh comyn,—
> "He þat stalworthy stondes, stir not too swithe,
> Lest he faile of his fotyng and a falle haue."[8]

Like Melibee, Priam calls a counsel and announces his desire to wage war on the Greeks. Later, in a private counsel with Priam and his sons, Hector declares that he also wants redress, but he counsels caution:

> Ouer lokes all lures to the laste end,
> What wull falle of þe first furthe þe middis;
> Sue forth to þe secounde, serche it with in
> And loke to þe last ende, what lure may happyn. (2241-44)

Hector is, of course, counselling prudence. Hector advises Priam that his first counsel was wild and could, therefore, be waived. He points out to Priam that they will be fighting the mightiest armies in the

[7] Dictys 101.

[8] The "Gest Hystoriale" of the Destruction of Troy, ed. George A. Panton and David Donaldson, Early English Text Society Original Series 39 & 56 (London: Trübner, for the Early English Text Society, 1869, 1874) 2072-77.

world and could lose their city for the sake of Hesione, a single individual. She has been lost a long time: Troy was rebuilt in the meantime. Hector declares that it is not cowardice, but concern for the city that motivates him. Another son, Helenus—a bishop and a philosopher "in þe Syense ful sad of þe seuyn Artes" (1485)—tells Priam that God has told him that an expedition to Greece will end in terrible disaster for Troy. But it is the hot desire for war displayed by Troilus, Deiphebus and Paris that wins the day in the counsel. Priam considers Paris's dream of his Judgment of the goddesses an especially good omen.

Within the context of the general medieval tradition of the matter of Troy, the Judgment of Paris holds place as the pre-eminent example of imprudent choice. Margaret Ehrhart shows that the three goddesses, among whom Paris must choose, had been associated from the time of Aristotle and Plato with the three modes of life: the contemplative (or philosophical), the active (or political), and the life of pleasure.[9] Venus's role in this scheme was the most stable, and she usually represented the life of pleasure. Pallas Athena, or Minerva, could represent either the life of the warrior or the life of wisdom, but, after Fulgentius, she came to represent the contemplative life almost exclusively.[10] Traditionally, Juno, or Hera, could represent chastity or political life, but Fulgentius has her represent the acquisition of

[9] Margaret J. Ehrhart, The Judgment of the Trojan Prince Paris in Medieval Literature, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1987) 26-27.

[10] Fulgentius wrote his Mythologies in the late fifth or early sixth century.

riches only. In the Fulgentian scheme, which Ehrhart says, "because of his popularity in the Middle Ages . . . held the stage, almost without exception, for nearly a thousand years," the contemplative life is the only one of the three lives which is not to be condemned.[11] Therefore, Paris should have chosen Pallas Athene and the contemplative life.

The Fulgentian thread runs through the earlier medieval tradition of allegorical interpretation of the Judgment, but prior to Fulgentius, the active life had been given a more positive moral stature. Aristotle, for instance, describes various conceptions of the Good in terms of the various kinds of lives, beginning with the life of pleasure:

> διὸ καὶ τὸν βίον ἀγαπῶσι τὸν ἀπολαυστικόν—τρεῖς γάρ εἰσι μάλιστα οἱ προύχοντες, ὅ τε νῦν εἰρημένος καὶ ὁ πολιτικὸς καὶ τρίτος ὁ θεωρητικός. οἱ μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ παντελῶς ἀνδραποδώδεις φαίνονται βοσκημάτων βίον προαιρούμενοι, τυγχάνουσι δὲ λόγου διὰ τὸ πολλοὺς τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ὁμοιοπαθεῖν Σαρδαναπάλλῳ.[12]

[11] Ehrhart 27. The second main medieval interpretative tradition of the Judgment treated the Judgment as an historical fact but "rationalized" it by maintaining that Paris performed the Judgment in a dream. This tradition begins with Dares. The allegorical and rationalizing traditions merge in dream visions such as Guillaume de Machaut's Dit de la fonteinne amoureuse and Jean Froissart's Espinette amoureuse (Ehrhart 131-51).

[12] Ethics 1.5.2-3. "On the one hand the generality of men and the most vulgar identify the Good with pleasure, and accordingly are content with the Life of Enjoyment—for there are three specially prominent Lives, the one just mentioned, the Life of Politics, and thirdly, the Life of Contemplation. The generality of mankind then show themselves to be utterly slavish, by preferring what is only a life for cattle; but they get a hearing for their view [of life] as [a] reasonable [one] because many persons of high position share the feelings of Sardanapallus." One version of Sardanapallus's epitaph was "ἔσθιε, πῖνε, παῖζε· ὡς τἆλλα τούτου οὐκ ἄξια τοῦ ἀποκροτήματος" ["Eat, drink, play, since all else is not worth that snap of the fingers"] (Ethics 1.5.3n).

For Aristotle, the active life is the life that produces practical political or social happiness through activities that conform to virtue. The chief among these virtues is, of course, prudence. The greatest happiness is that found in the exercise of the greatest virtue, wisdom, and wisdom is best exercised in the contemplative life.[13] Of the three lives, only the life of pleasure is at all reprehensible while the other two, though not equal in value, should both be pursued. Indeed, the active life is the training ground for the contemplative:

> For non may come to lif þat is gostliche, lif þat clerkes clepen contemplatif, but ȝif he be wel proued & assaied in þe lif of bisynesse of þe world, þat clerkes clepen actif lif, as seynt Gregorie seiþ.[14]

The allegorical tradition consistently portrays Paris as making the wrong choice because he chooses the wrong mode of life. The only really significant change in the pattern of the allegory came when Fulgentius's condemnation of the active life was gradually changed to acceptance as Aristotle was reintroduced in the twelfth century. Not only was the Judgment interpreted directly in uncounted versions of the story, but Ehrhart shows that, through the centuries of the later Middle Ages, a steady march of lovers was intercepted on their way to the Garden of Love to be instructed, by the debate between Reason and Love, in the folly of Paris's choice.

The precise virtues associated with Pallas and Juno were by no means fixed but varied from version to version and over time. Some

[13] Ethics. 10.7.1.

[14] The Book of Vices and Virtues: A Fourteenth Century English Translation of the Somme le roi of Lorens d'Orleans, ed. W. Nelson Francis, Early English Text Society Original Series 217 (London: Oxford UP, for the Early English Text Society, 1942) 220-21.

short examples should serve to show some of the variation. In Pierre Busuire's Ovidius Moralizatus (c. 1340), Pallas represents ratio, and Juno memoria, a part of prudence.[15] Both Jean Seznec and Beryl Smalley note that John Ridewall, in his Fulgentius Metaforalis (c. 1330), associates Saturn with prudence and his children, Juno, Neptune and Pluto, with memoria, intelligentia and providentia respectively.[16] After Chaucer, Jacques Milet's Lystoire de la destruction de troye la grant (c. 1450) associates Juno with wealth, and Pallas with prudence.[17] Although it is somewhat unusual to associate Pallas with prudence, Milet draws most of the material for his interpretation from Guido de Colonna and Benoît de Sainte-Maure. Lydgate's Troy Book (c. 1412-1420), commissioned for a specifically courtly audience, represents Pallas as virtue, Juno as riches, and Venus, because of her white doves, as truth in love, which should remind us that there were two Venuses, one chaste, the other not.[18] In the end, however, it is Chaucer's own work which must define how he understands allegory in the work of his predecessors and whether it informs his poem in any way.

If the poem's metastructure can be defined largely by the history of Trojan imprudence, we might expect that the structure of the poem itself can also be so defined. We might expect early indications that,

[15] Ehrhart 98.

[16] Seznec 94; Beryl Smalley, English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960) 111. Ridewall was part of what Smalley describes as the "classicising" movement among early fourteenth-century English Franciscans and Dominicans.

[17] Ehrhart 50.

[18] Ehrhart 58.

if there is to be a tragedy, such a tragedy will be of its protagonists' own making. Instead, we must ask why we are given so many powerful suggestions of fatal inevitability from the very opening lines of the poem. Susan Schibanoff suggests that the "foreknowledge" we are granted at the beginning of the poem is a prudential foreknowledge. Schibanoff is quite correct in her view that the audience has memories of the Trojan past and an understanding of the poem's "present" at any point that we might have reached in our reading. But Schibanoff is, perhaps, a little too enthusiastic about her model when she proclaims that, because the author has provided us with foreknowledge of the poem's outcome, we become prudent in our reading of the poem.[19] Our foreknowledge of events does not come from our own efforts in remembering the past and understanding the present in order to foresee the future. Neither are we, as she claims, "omniscient." We do not have the perfect prudence of God, called "providence," because we cannot foresee the details of Troilus and Criseyde's downfalls. Even if we could foresee details, the knowledge is not something we can act upon in respect of the poem: we can hardly intervene and ask Troilus to act differently than he does.

The prudential structure of the poem can be seen in Schibanoff's model, but it does not represent real prudence. The entire prudential process is pre-empted in the opening of the poem: our memories of Troy may exist, but our poetic "present" is in the foreknowledge provided for us in the first eight stanzas. The audience's prudence is only enacted

[19] Chauntecleer, we will recall, had a very clear foreknowledge that he was in danger, but he was far from prudent. Prudence has to do with how one uses such knowledge: it is a virtue because it has to do with virtuous action.

away from the poem when the poem becomes part of the audience's memories and only when it is understood as a pattern of action and relationship to be observed and avoided.[20] If the structure of the poem is prudential, it must inhere at the level of the characters, their pronouncements, their actions and their relationships.

The poem shows a considerable interplay between expressions of fatal inevitability and actions which, though they seem prudent, are really imprudent. If we bring a Boethian attitude to the poem, we know that trust in Fortune is wrong, and we know that we have enough free will to act and to act morally. But we also know that something is fatally wrong with the choices made by the main characters in Troilus and Criseyde, and we are constantly presented with the choice between trusting in Fortune and judging the prudence of the protagonists.

At the beginning of this paper, we noted the intellectual distance of the modern age from the moral conceptions of the Middle Ages. No better example of this distance can be adduced than the context of imprudent action established very early in Troilus and Criseyde

[20] The reader will recall the idea of "literary" prudence from the first chapter, the idea that the prudent reader of ancient tales will choose the right tale, the tale that best suits the present situation and whose ending provides the foreknowledge of the outcome of events:

> Than mote we to bokes that we fynde,
> Thurgh whiche that olde thinges ben in mynde,
> And to the doctrine of these olde wyse,
> Yeve credence, in every skylful wyse.
> . . . . . .
> And yf that olde bokes were aweye,
> Yloren were of remembraunce the keye.
> Wel ought us thanne honouren and beleve
> These bokes, there we han noon other preve.
> (Legend 17-20, 25-28)

immediately following the opening passages on the "destiny" of Troilus. Calchas is not evidently imprudent in his course of action. He appears to have a reasoned, "calkulynge" understanding of his present situation, and he can foresee its outcome. He appears to act properly and cautiously in his self-preservation. He seems, in short, to have satisfied most of the preconditions of prudent action. But Thomas Aquinas would argue that Calchas's action has a social and political dimension that makes his actions imprudent. First, we will recall, the subject of a king has an obligation to be politically prudent:

> Per prudentiam communiter dictam regit homo seipsum in ordine ad proprium bonum: per politicam autem de qua loquimur, in ordine ad bonum commune.[21]

The obligation to be politically prudent requires that the subject work for the common good:

> Quia igitur ad prudentiam pertinet recte consiliari, iudicare et praecipere de his per quae pervenitur ad debitum finem, manifestum est quod prudentia non solum se habet ad bonum privatum unius hominis, sed etiam ad bonum commune multitudinis.[22]

The common good is held to be better than one's personal good. Calchas is rightly called "traitour" by the Trojans he leaves behind because he eschews the common good for his personal good:

[21] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q50.2. "By prudence, as it is commonly called, a man directs himself according to his own good: by political [prudence], however, according to the common good."

[22] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q47.A10. "Because, accordingly, it pertains to prudence rightly to counsel, to judge and to direct towards what must be attained as a due end: it is manifest that prudence regards not only the private good of one man, but also the common good of the many." This article pertains particularly to rulers, but compare also 2-2.Q47.A13 where Thomas argues that the subject who has a part in governing is under the same obligation as the ruler. As a counselor of some stature, Calchas has a part in governing.

> Est quod ad prudentiam pertinet praeferre maius bonum minus bono. Ergo desistere a meliori pertinet ad imprudentiam. Sed hoc est inconstantia. Ergo inconstantia pertinet ad imprudentiam.[23]

Calchas's "greater good" is in the preservation of his own local community from the ravages of war, but it is also to preserve the greater community of humankind from the same ravages. If Calchas has a special knowledge of the outcome of events, he must surely be party to their causes and, therefore, to their solution. It is incumbent upon him to advise Priam of this knowledge either until it is acted upon and the war is ended, or until he is killed by the invading Greeks. His withdrawal from the common good is also, incidentally, against charity which requires him to look to the good of others before his own.[24]

One reason for introducing this chapter with remarks on the poem's metastructure is in the need to remind ourselves that the love of Troilus and Criseyde is not simply a typical courtly romance. Their relationship is conducted in a time of war in a city under siege. Troilus, especially, has moral and political obligations as a prince which cannot be abandoned for his life as a lover. While his city and his society are under threat of extinction—and Priam's prophetic children, Helenus and Cassandra, have warned that so it is—he must be prepared to direct all of his energies to its defence.[25]

[23] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q53.A5. "It pertains to prudence to prefer the greater good to the lesser. Therefore, to desist from the better pertains to imprudence. But this is inconstancy. Therefore, inconstancy pertains to imprudence."

[24] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q47.A10.

[25] Dares 139-40.

The war is mentioned almost casually throughout the tale. Calchas's treason and Criseyde's difficulties are introduced in the context of remarks about the war, and the scene in the temple where Troilus first catches sight of Criseyde is introduced thus:

> But though that Grekes hem of Troie shetten,
> And hir cite biseged al aboute,
> Hire olde usage nolde they nat letten,
> As for to honoure hir goddes ful devoute;
> But aldirmost in honour, out of doute,
> Thei hadde a relik, heet Palladion,
> That was hire trist aboven everichon. (1.148-54)

Troilus, in his love-sickness, is later described as fighting solely to improve his reputation with Criseyde (1.477-83). Within a very few stanzas, we meet Pandarus for the first time. But life, and love, go on in Troy as if in a daze: no one speaks of the war as if it represents any real danger to them even though it always seems to be present to everyone. Only Criseyde seems to fear the siege:

> For Goddes love; is than th'assege aweye?
> I am of Grekes so fered that I deye. (2.123-124)

But, while the whole city carries on blindly, the main protagonists each have their own profound and particular ways of being imprudent. Troilus's status as a possible heir to the throne, the unrelenting sacrifice of his will to Criseyde and to Fortune, the singular lack of understanding and foresight in his actions, and his inability to separate his role as lover from his role as prince—all lead to the conclusion that the tale is as much about his moral failure as it is about his love.

A medieval audience would find little that was morally ambiguous in Troilus's behaviour as a <u>prince</u>: it is simply not right. Troilus's faithfulness to Criseyde is admirable and moving, but it is clear by the end of the poem that his "trouthe" alone has not been sufficient to

excuse his bad conduct as a prince. Among the elements of this moral tale, we witness the spectacle of a "kynges sone" eschewing important social and political obligations for a love affair. We observe a potential heir to the throne either defending the city for his reputation, or throwing himself into its defence with suicidal abandon whenever he falls into a state of woe. It is only in the state of well-being brought on by love, or by the confident hope of love, that he seems best to fulfill his obligations. We become less inclined to excuse Troilus, or to speak of the ennobling effect of love on his character, and we become more inclined to suggest that, while he is perhaps not the author of his own woe, he is the author of his own downfall.[26] We must ask how it is that a prince can be ennobled by subsuming his will in the will of others.

Troilus's role as a prince should not be underestimated. According to Dares, he is the youngest of Priam's nineteen legitimate sons. But Dictys notes that twelve of Priam's sons are killed in a single battle late in the war.[27] By this point in the history, Hector and Sarpedon are also dead, and eventually all the sons of Priam are killed. In a time of war, Troilus stands a very real chance of becoming immediate heir to the throne. There is also the question of Troilus's own worth: Paris and Deiphebus are sons of Priam, but they are never described in quite the same terms as Troilus. Troilus is variously

[26] F. Xavier Baron, "Chaucer's Troilus and Self-Renunciation in Love," Papers on Language and Literature 10 (1974): 5-14. Baron argues that Troilus progresses from vanity to the medieval ideal of self-abnegation in love, and that he is "ennobled" in the process.

[27] Dares 139; Dictys 91-92.

"Ector the secounde" (2.158), "nevere unto no wight / As in his tyme, in no degree secounde" (5.835-836), and, as Pandarus reminds us,

> For out and out he is the worthieste,
> Save only Ector, which that is the beste. (2.739-740)

The first anaphora at the end of the poem lays particular stress on Troilus's rank:

> Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love!
> Swich fyn hath al his grete worthynesse!
> Swich fyn hath his estat real above!
> Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse!
> Swych fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse!
> And thus bigan his lovyng of Criseyde,
> As I have told, and in this wise he deyde. (5.1828-340)

The equation of worth and nobility is a commonplace of medieval political theory. Troilus may well be the direct heir to the throne after the death of Hector (5.1555), yet even with the new obligations that this entails, his love-sickness persists until his own death.

There are frequent references throughout the poem to his noblesse, his worthiness, his excellence, his virtue, his royalty, his nobility and his gentilesse.[28] Troilus's noble status is referred to upwards of seventy times in the poem and clusters of such references are fairly evenly distributed.[29] A significant cluster occurs in Pandarus's negotiations with Criseyde in Book II. Pandarus is attempting to turn

[28] Wood 34-35.

[29] This figure is based on a count of the number of occurrences of epithets and adjectives with direct reference to Troilus. The vocabulary examined includes "excellent," "degre," "gentilesse," "knyght," "kynges son," "noble," "real," "worthe," "vertu" and their derivatives. "Honour" is a term almost exclusively reserved for Criseyde's reputation. Only Diomede is referred to as "chivalrous." Only Calchas and Deiphebus are referred to a "curteys" except in one instance in Book IV where Troilus is acting as Criseyde's escort to the Greek camp.

Criseyde's attention towards Troilus, and he praises Troilus's "Wisdom, honour, fredom, and worthinesse" (2.161). Criseyde responds:

> "In good feith, em," quod she, "that liketh me
> Thei faren wel; God save hem bothe two!
> For trewelich I holde it gret deynte,
> A kynges sone in armes wel to do,
> And ben of goode condiciouns therto;
> For gret power and moral vertu here
> Is selde yseyn in o persone yfere."
>
> "In good faith, that is soth," quod Pandarus.
> "But, by my trouthe, the kyng hath sones tweye,—
> That is to mene, Ector and Troilus." (2.162-175)

Troilus's status is emphasized by Pandarus in these passages to make him appear more worthy in Criseyde's opinion, but the effect of the repetition, here and elsewhere, is to keep Troilus's rank insistently present in the audience's mind.

The importance of Troilus's rank is even emphasized in the style of the poem's beginning. The opening is like the argument of a de casibus tragedy, such as this from Lydgate's The Fall of Princes:

> How Saul, Kyng of Ierusalem born of low degre as long as he dred god was obedient to him / and rewlid by good counsaile had many grete disconfitures / but atte last / for his pride presumpcioun and grete disobysaunce / he lost his crowne and was slayn by Philestees.

Saul begins at a low state, rises to a position of great rank, and falls again. Troilus and Crisyede also begins by emphasizing Troilus's status and career:

> The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,
> That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,
> In lovynge, how his aventures fellen
> Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie,
> My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye. (1.1-5)

Love is not an unusual cause for a fall in de casibus tragedy.[30] The

[30] See, for example, the tales of Medea (1.2191-2401) and Scylla (1.2451-2647) in Lydgate's Fall of Princes.

narrator seems to misdirect us by immediately plunging into an apostrophe on Love, but the pattern set in the opening lines is of the rise from a low state—in Troilus's case, a state of lover's woe—and the eventual fall of an illustrious man, and it is the pattern of the poem as a whole.

The preceding chapters of this paper have emphasized the special obligations of the prince to be virtuous in every respect. A society can bear an imprudent fool like January in the "Merchant's Tale," but when a fool is a ruler, the whole of the society suffers for it. We will now turn to the details of how Troilus's imprudence manifests itself in the denial of his own will and, in particular, in the intemperance of his response to love.

Like Calchas, Troilus is introduced in a context of imprudence, but this time by an image of imprudence rather than through an imprudent activity. We first catch sight of Troilus engaged in the obvious imprudence of mocking the God of Love. But less obvious is the image of imprudence in the comparison of Troilus to a cart-horse. J. D. Burnley has taken pains to trace the development of Bayard the horse through medieval European literature from his beginnings as "a horse of supernatural sagacity" through his use as a topos of authorial modesty or of authorial incompetence, to his most characteristic use as an image of imprudence.[31] Bayard, taken outside of a given literary context, has no other necessary connotations than that he is a horse. But typically

[31] J. D. Burnley, "Proude Bayard: Troilus and Criseyde, I.218," Notes and Queries 23 (1976): 149.

> the analogy between the blind horse and the human situation depends upon attitudes and actions which disregard the constraints of reason. More specifically what is lacking is the aspect of rationality, prudence, which decides upon courses of action, and thus forms the basis of morality.[32]

It is the very animality of Bayard and the blundering in his blindness which recommended him as an image of imprudence in the first place. Burnley notes that Chaucer's Bayard is "not specifically blind; indeed he is proud and mettlesome,"[33] but Burnley also notes that Bayard is contained, nonetheless, within the proverbial tradition of blindness and within the poem's context of the blind world:

> O blynde world, O blynde entencioun!
> How often falleth al the effect contraire
> Of surquidrie and foul presumpcioun. (1.211-213)

The Bayard comparison is, then, rather a neat inversion. In a courtly love context, it would suggest a mocking and imprudent Troilus brought under control by Love. But Troilus under the control of Love is given to uncontrolled fits of woe, and it is suggestive that Love's control is described in terms of an emblem of imprudence: this is the last moment in which we will see Troilus exercising any self-control.

We will not argue that Troilus is intemperate in his behaviour because he is inordinately concupiscent. If we recall that the essence of temperance is in "tranquillitas animi," we need not risk being prudish in respect of Troilus's love of Criseyde.[34] The generosity and tolerance that are the hallmark of Thomas Aquinas's discussion of

[32] Burnley 151.

[33] Burnley 152.

[34] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q141.A2. "Tranquillity (or serenity) of mind (or spirit)."

charity are central characteristics of Chaucer's poetry. Whatever is beautiful in the love of Troilus and Criseyde remains beautiful at its centre despite the shortcomings of its principals and its shortcomings as a satisfactory mode of life. If Troilus's only intemperate act was to become involved in an illicit, albeit courtly, love affair that went bad through infidelity, we would have little to make in the way of a moral commentary. Troilus's fall would then be seen too easily as a simple consequence of the sin of adultery, and the political ramifications of his woe would disappear. It is, finally, his inability to govern his woe, not his woe itself, that marks his intemperance, and it is his intemperance that marks his imprudence.

Troilus is shown in two states of woe in the poem. In the first, he is completely overcome by an inability to act on his own behalf, and in the second, he is subject to a growing frenzy that finally results in his death. It is plain that Troilus has no "serenity of spirit" almost from the moment that he is struck by Love's dart. Even before he gets home from the temple it is clear that his love has unsettled him. He is filled with woe and shame at his recent mocking of love, a woe which he seeks to conceal:

> Lest it were wist on any manere syde,
> His woo he gan dissimulen and hide. (1.321-322)

He is tossed between the paradoxes of love—the woe from good, the thirst from drinking—and hourly bewails Criseyde's lack of "rewe" for his situation. His groans and tears amount to the whole of his activity in the days that follow his affliction:

> Alle other dredes weren from him fledde,
> Both of th'assege and his savacioun;
> N'yn him desir noon other fownes bredde,
> But argumentes to this conclusioun:
> That she of him wolde han compassioun,

> And he to ben hire man, while he may dure.
> Lo, here his lif, and from the deth his cure! (1.463-469)

All thought of his own future, and of the future of his city, is forgotten. When he is not in his chamber suffering his secret pain, he is on the battle-field fighting, not for his city, but for himself so that he might come to Criseyde's attention and good opinion:

> But for non hate he to the Grekes hadde,
> Ne also for the rescous of the town,
> Ne made hym thus in armes for to madde,
> But only, lo, for this conclusioun:
> To liken hire the bet for his renoun.
> Fro day to day in armes so he spedde,
> That the Grekes as the deth him dredde. (1.477-483)

He is "mad" in arms and does not exercise prudent caution in the field. It is not courage but daring, a vice opposed to both fortitude and temperance precisely because it is reckless (that is, it leads him away from reason).[35] He is at a greater risk of losing his life and of losing it needlessly: like Calchas's "calkulynge," Troilus's daring leads to a temporary advantage, but it is an advantage ultimately opposed to the "comoun profit." Even if we accept that Troilus's loss of appetite and sleep, his tears and moans, the evident genuineness of his feeling, all make him "the embodiment of the medieval ideal of lover and warrior," and even if we experience his character as "pathos pure and unrelieved," we should also experience some unease.[36]

Troilus falls into a state of otherwise nearly complete stasis and exaggerated suffering. He bemoans Criseyde's lack of sympathy for his plight, but does nothing to draw her attention to it. When Troilus is

[35] Summa Theo. II-II.Q127.A1-2.

[36] C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (New York: Oxford UP, 1958) 195.

first discovered by Pandarus, Pandarus tries to urge him out of his woe by the mocking suggestion that he has fallen into a holy devotion. Although initially concerned, Pandarus begins to guess that Troilus is afflicted by love, and offers some advice. When Troilus does not answer, Pandarus becomes genuinely alarmed:

> Yet Troilus for al this no word seyde,
> But longe he ley as stylle as he ded were;
> And after this with sikynge he abreyde,
> And to Pandarus vois he lente his ere,
> And up his eighen caste he, that in feere
> Was Pandarus, lest that in frenesie
> He sholde falle, or elles soone dye. (1.722-728)

So profound is Troilus's swoon that Pandarus must shout in his ear to revive him.

Chaucer's narrator typically excuses Troilus's behaviour before we are allowed to see what is to be excused. Just as typically, the excuse is an order of magnitude short of encompassing the excesses of behaviour. We are ill-prepared for Troilus's near-hysterical response to the pangs of love when the narrator merely asserts that wiser men than Troilus have been overcome by love:

> Men reden nat that folk han gretter wit
> Than they that han be most with love ynome;
> And strengest folk ben therwith overcome,
> The worthiest and grettest of degree:
> This was, and is, and yet men shal it see. (1.241-245)

The great men evoked by Chaucer's narrator as examples for Troilus's excuse could not have all remained fixed in their woe, but must ultimately have sought relief and serenity. We may recall that the likes of Solomon, Virgil, Aristotle, Hercules and Samson have all looked foolish for love, but we do not remember them chiefly for this folly.[37]

[37] This list of possible "historical" figures was provided by Stephen Barney, the Riverside editor (241-43n).

They are each, in fact, proverbial for their wisdom, prudence and fortitude. Each made some effort to allow reason to reassert itself, to temper the pangs of love, but, more importantly, their intemperance cannot excuse Troilus's.

Once Pandarus has agreed to aid Troilus in winning Criseyde, Troilus appears to take on a new calm:

> For he bicom the frendlieste wight,
> The gentilest, and ek the mooste fre,
> The thriftiest, and oon the beste knyght,
> That in his tyme was or myghte be;
> Dede were his japes and his cruelte,
> His heighe port and his manere estraunge,
> And ecch of tho gan for a vertu chaunge. (1.1079-85)

But despite his outward calm, Troilus persists in his love-sickness. Troilus is not altogether recovered, but

> fareth lik a man that hurt is soore,
> And is somdeel of akyngge of his wownde
> Ylissed wel, but heeled no deel moore. (1.1087-89)

When Pandarus advises Troilus to feign sickness at his meeting with Criseyde,

> Quod Troilus, "Iwis, thow nedeles
> Conseilest me that siklich I me feyne,
> For I am sik in ernest, douteles,
> So that wel neigh I sterve for the peyne." (2.1527-30)

In "The Knight's Tale," Arcite suffers from the same malady as Troilus, the same inability to eat or sleep, the same uncontrolled weeping and moaning. The Knight identifies Arcite's illness as "hereos," or love-sickness, but adds that the disease is also something more:

> And in his geere for al the world he ferde
> Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
> Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,
> Engendred of humour malencolik

Biforen, in his celle fantastik.[38]

Arcite's disease is not only hereos but additionally something engendered from a melancholy humour in his "celle fantastik," the front part of the brain which controls the imagination. Whether or not Troilus has the same added melancholy as Arcite is beside the point: Arcite dreams that Mercury wants him to return to Athens to try to win Emilye, which he does, finding some solace in labour while he looks for ways to get close to Emilye. But, as in the case of Troilus, this short respite only leads on to the frenzied battle which ends Arcite's life.

It is difficult at this distance to judge an audience's reaction to Troilus's love-sickness. Richard Green makes a strong case that love-sickness was sometimes recognized in the fourteenth century as an often-successful deception practiced by the unscrupulous seducer on the unschooled damsel. He notes especially that the wife of La Tour-Landry is particularly concerned that her daughters not be taken in by men who

> gyue oute of theyr brestes grete and fayned syghes / And make as they were thynkynge and Melancolyous / And after they cast a fals loke / And thenne the good and debonayr wymmen that sene them / supposen / that they be esprysed of trewe and feythfull loue / but alle maner of folke / which vsen to make suche semblaunt / ben but deceyvours or begylers of the ladyes and damoysels.[39]

[38] Chaucer, Geoffrey, "The Knight's Tale," The Canterbury Tales, The Riverside Chaucer. 1.1372-1376.

[39] William Caxton, trans., The Book of the Knight of the Tower, ed. M. Y. Offord, Early English Text Society Supplemental Series 2 (London: Oxford UP, 1971) 166. Cited in Richard F. Green, "Troilus and the Game of Love," Chaucer Review 13 (1979): 204. At the time of writing, Mary F. Wack's new study, Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and its Commentaries (Philadelpha: U Pennsylvania P, 1990), was unavailable. Doubtless, this new work would have influenced this part of the discussion.

Green neglects to note that the wife then goes on to describe the true lover, who, like Troilus, is afraid to approach his lady for fear of any word that might offend her.[40] This addition might rather complicate a fourteenth-century audience's response to Troilus's love-sickness. But Green also cites medical textbooks that treat hereos as a rare and unprofitable malady by which "few, if any, are nowadays slain." He quotes "the heroine of Chartier's La Belle Dame Sans Mercy rebutting her unwelcome suitor with the words 'This sicknesse is right esy to endure, / But fewe people it causeth for to dy.'"[41] No one could doubt the genuineness of Troilus's suffering, but Green argues that few would be less than circumspect about its seriousness.

But, as Mary Wack has pointed out, amor hereos is nevertheless treated in the medical textbooks as a potentially fatal illness even if death was a comparatively rare occurrence.[42] Troilus's suffering is intense and genuine however much the audience's view may be coloured by the kind of circumspection described by Green. The treatments prescribed in the textbooks are curiously amoral, and they include sexual intercourse as a therapeutic means of balancing the humours. Wack argues that the materiality of the illness, its presumedly involuntary nature, permits both Troilus and Pandarus to evade the moral issues raised by their designs on Criseyde. But she also rightly points out

[40] The Book of The Knight of La Tour-Landry, ed. Thomas Wright, Early English Text Society (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, for the Early English Text Society, 1868) 175.

[41] Green 204.

[42] Mary F. Wack, "Lovesickness in Troilus," Pacific Coast Philology 19.1-2 (1984) 55-61.

that Troilus chooses to love.[43] By assenting to love Criseyde, despite his own remembrance that love can yield bitter fruit, Troilus commits the essential act of will which renders his suffering both voluntary and culpable. He begins well enough by determining to learn enough about love so that he may recover from his passion:

> Thus took he purpos loves craft to suwe,
> And thoughte he wolde werken pryvely,
> First to hiden his desir in muwe
> From every wight yborn, al outrely,
> But he myghte ought recovered be therby,
> Remembryng hym that love to wide yblowe
> Yelt bittre fruyt, though swete seed be sowe. (1.379-385)

But the attempt is abortive. In the very next stanza we find Troilus giving further consideration to the question, only to collapse, unrepenting and with full assent, into his woe:

> And over al this, yet muchel more he thoughte
> What for to speke, and what to holden inne;
> And what to arten hire to love he soughte,
> And on a song anon-right to bygynne,
> And gan loude on his sorwe for to wynne;
> For with good hope he gan fully assente
> Criseyde for to love, and nought repente. (1.386-392)

Pandarus and Criseyde, as Troilus's physicians, practise all of the textbook cures on Troilus, but he is never cured.[44] The cure that was available to him when he resolved to remember the bitter fruit of love remains available to him until he dies. But, unlike Solomon and Virgil and the rest, he does not choose to be cured.

[43] Wack 58, 59.

[44] Wack 58-59. Wack argues that Troilus <u>is</u> cured by the absence of Criseyde which causes his love to become "dematerialized" in memory and thus frees him from his sense of being fated. The argument which follows in this paper will show that Troilus does not show any "moral development" after Criseyde's departure from the city.

Except for the gloriously comic moment of his inglorious swoon at Criseyde's bedside, Troilus eventually achieves the calm serenity in love that characterizes the peculiar beauty of Book III. The false calm that he experiences at the end of Book I becomes genuine. He grows in virtue and nobility, and his love for Criseyde is mutual and a golden moment of perfect stability. But the end of the first phase of Troilus's intemperance begins on a dark note, a note which sounds to the core of his character. In winning Criseyde, he agrees to sacrifice his will to hers:

> "But natheles, this warne I yow," quod she,
> "A kynges sone although ye be, ywys,
> Ye shal namore han sovereignete
> Of me in love, than right in that cas is;
> N'y nyl forbere, if that ye don amys,
> To wratthe yow; and whil that ye me serve,
> Chericen yow right after ye disserve." (3.169-175)

Even though it is here a qualified sovereignty that Criseyde claims, it will grow until it wholly absorbs Troilus's will. His moral growth is short-lived, and it atrophies in the revival of his passions.

Troilus's second phase of intemperate passion falls upon him the moment he hears of the proposal to exchange Criseyde for Antenor. The scene at the parliament of Troy, and Troilus's response to it, crystallizes not only our picture of Troilus's character, but the malaise of Troy itself. Chauncey Wood reminds us that Troilus's name means, literally, "Little Troy," and he notes that the fall of Troy is paralleled in the fall of Troilus.[45] Troilus alone cannot be blamed for the fall of the city, but "nevertheless his similarity to Paris, whose service of Venus is the cause of Troy's downfall, reminds the audience of

[45] Wood 32.

the parallel."[46] Paris's imprudence was to choose Venus, the goddess of love, at his famous judgment when he should have chosen Athena or Hera. The city's imprudence was to throw its unconditional support behind Paris. Only Hector stands against the foolish parliament in defence of Criseyde, and this moment could have been the great turning point for the city. His reason for defending Criseyde should have reminded them of the basis for the city's woe:

> "Syres, she nys no prisonere," he seyde;
> "I not on yow who that this charge leyde,
> But, on my part, ye may eftsone hem telle,
> We usen here no wommen for to selle." (4.179-182)

But the city has bought a woman, Helen, at the price of its faulty judgment. The city has the example of the war before them, the reminder of the Judgment that has brought them to this pass, and they foolishly exchange Criseyde for Antenor who will ultimately open the gates to the Greeks.

The imprudence of the people is proverbial, as Lydgate reminds us in his lament for the bad rewards that sometimes come to those who prudently work for "comounte," despite their prudence:

> The peeple folweth ther owne oppynyouns,
> In ther conceitis thei be so wonderful;
> Will halt the bridil of ther discreciouns:
> Ther hasti deemyng so bestial is & dull,
> On blynde Baiard thei braiden at a pull,
> To quite the guerdouns of marcial bounte
> Of them that doon for any comounte.
> (Fall of Princes 5.1825-31)

Chaucer's narrator is equally astonished at the haste of the parliament that "breme as blase of strawe i-set on fire" (4.184). He cites

[46] Wood 33.

Juvenal's assessment "that litel wyten folk what is to yerne," and he criticizes their folly in choosing Antenor:

> For he was after traitour to the town
> Of Troye. Allas, they quytte hym out to rathe!
> O nyce world, lo, thy discrecioun! (4.204-206)

At the moment that the parliament makes its rash and imprudent decision, Troilus makes an equally imprudent decision, apparently through careful deliberation.

Troilus's first response to the news of the proposed exchange is to fall into a desperately intemperate state once again:

> This Troilus was present in the place
> Whan axed was for Antenor Criseyde,
> For which ful soone chaungen gan his face,
> As he that with tho wordes wel neigh deyde. (4.148-151)

Perhaps we might wish to excuse his reaction as the shock of the moment, but his state only worsens until he must go home to bed where he is "disposed wood out of his wit to breyde" (4.230). The narrator asserts that Love urges Troilus to act to save Criseyde and that Reason urges him to respect the secrecy of his affair with her (4.162-168).[47] But, as we have seen above, intemperance leads away from reason. The opposition of Love and Reason is not, in this case, the struggle of the prudent mind against passion. Love still suggests the passionate act of dying before losing Criseyde, while the "Reason" of Troilus's distempered mind suggests the one thing that will guarantee the loss of Criseyde, his silence and refusal to act.

[47] The capitalization of "reason" is purely an editorial decision on the part of the Riverside editor: neither Skeat nor Robinson does so. It makes for a rather neat opposition between Love and Reason, but it may mislead by suggesting that Troilus is being properly influenced by a Right Reason as a opposed to a faulty reason.

Troilus is, at this moment, in a perfect position to effect the convergence of the "comoun profit" and his own personal good. His obligation as a prince of the realm demands that he rescue Criseyde for the honour of the city, so that an innocent is not traded for a traitor, and his obligation as a lover demands that he rescue Criseyde for the serenity of his soul. He effects neither obligation, but chooses silence and inaction believing it to be both prudent and respectful of his promise of secrecy. Hector is utterly alone in his defence of Criseyde which is probably why he fails to rescue her. Milo Kearney and Mimosa Schraer make the point that Troilus did not have to violate his vow of secrecy to have seconded his brother, and they suggest that "together they might have swayed the assembly to their side."[48] June Hall Martin went further than Kearney and Schraer when she noted that Troilus's silence makes him even more conspicuous.[49] The parliament would naturally be disinclined to listen to Hector if even his own brother will not support him.

The imprudence of Troilus, hitherto only alluded to in such contexts as Calchas's treason and the Bayard comparison, has here borne itself out with a tragic completeness. Equally, Troilus's stasis and intemperance, which we once might have excused as temporary afflictions, now become the pure pattern of his character. The outcome of Troilus's intemperate behaviour is inevitable. Criseyde does not return, and at first, in a growing agitation of denial, Troilus sinks into a deepening

[48] Milo Kearney and Mimosa Schraer "The Flaw in Troilus," Chaucer Review 22 (1988): 186.

[49] June Hall Martin, Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover (London: Tamesis, 1972) 49.

suffering, and in the end, when the truth of Criseyde's betrayal becomes known to him, he will once again "madde" on the battle-field, in search of Diomede, but only to die at the hands of Achilles. To the end, Troilus will not make one positive gesture towards his own salvation, towards rising above his affliction through fortitude, or through prayer to the one deity that might have saved him, the patroness of his city.

In his first passion, Troilus complains to Pandarus that he is the victim of Fortune, an assertion that Pandarus dispenses with by arguing that Fortune is common to all. In the end, Troilus complains again that he is the victim of destiny, rehearsing all of Boethius's arguments in favour of predestination (4.958-1085).[50] But here Pandarus is not able to answer, as does Lady Philosophy, that within divine providence human will operates freely. Without the will to govern the passions, both pleasurable and painful, no one can be temperate. Without the will to act ordinately, no one can be prudent. Troilus is fated only because he believes himself to be fated. He allows Pandarus to conduct his love affair for him. He is the king's son who gives his sovereignty to his mistress. Perhaps he is so ready to give his will to Criseyde, along with his love, because his will is a trifle in which he does not believe.

It hardly needs to be argued that, for most of the poem, Troilus is in no fit condition to distinguish good counsel from bad. Troilus's love is "sodeyn"; he responds to Pandarus's first words with anger; and, if we accept the link between concupiscence and covetousness in the Ninth Commandment, Troilus could be said to covet Criseyde's love. Ire,

[50] Boethius 5.pr3.

haste and covetousness are the passions that Prudence tells Melibee to drive from his heart before taking counsel, but they are really only incidental here. Even before she can begin to counsel him, Prudence must first calm Melibee's passion. But she does not act too quickly because

> This noble wyf Prudence remembred hire upon the sentence of Ovide, in his book that cleped is the Remedie of Love, where as he seith, "He is a fool that destourbeth the mooder to wepen in the deeth of hire child til she have wept hir fille as for a certein tyme, and thanne shal man doon his diligence with amyable wordes hire to reconforte, and preyen hire of hir wepyng for to stynte." For which resoun this noble wyf Prudence suffred hir housbonde for to wepe and crie as for a certein space. ("Melibee" 7.976-979)

When she finally does speak, it is to reprove Melibee for the folly of his passion:

> And whan she saugh hir tyme, she seyde hym in this wise: "Allas, my lord," quod she, "why make ye youreself for to be lyk a fool? For sothe it aperteneth nat to a wys man to maken swich a sorwe. Youre doghter, with the grace of god, shal warisshe and escape. And, al were it so that she right now were deed, ye ne oughte nat, as for hir deeth, youreself to destroye. Senek seith: 'The wise man shal nat take to greet disconfort for the deeth of his children, but, certes, he sholde suffren it in pacience as wel he abideth the deeth of his owene propre persone.'" (7.980-985)

Melibee's passion is obviously inordinate since he appears ready to destroy himself, not for the death of his daughter, but merely for her injuries. Even if Sophie was dead, Prudence asserts, Melibee should still suffer it with patience.

Unlike Prudence, Pandarus comes upon Troilus and, without a pause for consideration, attempts to urge Troilus out of his passionate woe by inspiring another passion:

> Thise wordes seyde he for the nones alle,
> That with swich thing he myght hym angry maken,
> And with an angre don his wo to falle,
> As for the tyme, and his corage awaken. (1.561-64)

His actual words are of interest, too. Pandarus knows that accusing Troilus of cowardice will provoke Troilus's ire. But Pandarus makes light of the threat outside the city walls, and of the possibility that Troilus might be repenting of past sins:

> "Allas," quod he, "who causeth al this fare?
> O mercy, God! what unhap may this meene?
> Han now thus soone Grekes maad yow leene?
>
> "Or hastow som remors of conscience,
> And art now falle in som devocioun,
> And wailest for thi synne and thin offence,
> And hast for ferde caught attricioun?
> God save hem that biseged han oure town,
> That so kan leye oure jolite on presse,
> And bringe oure lusty folk to holynesse!" (1.551-560)

There is a natural and easy wit in the conflation of the cowardice and the "holynesse," and it is the kind of superficial, joking response that anyone might make before understanding the seriousness of a friend's affliction. Pandarus does become concerned and even alarmed at the depth of Troilus's passion, but it is not long before we are disabused of our understanding of Pandarus as a concerned, if shallow, friend. Although he "neigh malt for wo and routhe" (1.582) on hearing that Troilus might die of his affliction, Pandarus reverts to mocking form once he learns that it is only a matter of love-sickness.

In the best tradition of friendship, Pandarus offers his services as a counselor. When Troilus objects that Pandarus has no skills in love, Pandarus replies that his deficiencies should not be an impediment to giving good counsel because success and failure are both parts of love, both can lead to understanding. Pandarus's failures can be a guide to Troilus's success "sith thus of two contraries is o lore" (1.645). Pandarus sets himself up a Troilus's counselor even though he is a self-avowed fool:

"Ye, Troilus, now herke," quod Pandare;
"Though I be nyce, it happeth often so,
That oon that excesse doth ful yvele fare
By good counseil kan kepe his frend therfro.
I have myself ek seyn a blynd man goo
Ther as he fel that couthe loken wide;
A fool may ek a wis-man ofte gide." (1.624-630)

Pandarus says that he will serve as a bad exemplum for Troilus, an exemplum by which Troilus can discern right conduct. But Troilus finally accepts Pandarus as a good counselor, and he slavishly follows his every direction: the bad example becomes the model of right conduct for Troilus.

The English version of the Somme le roi concurs with Prudence's advice to Melibee on the choosing of counselors:

> Holy writ biddeþ þe be war of euel counselors, and counseile þe not wiþ fooles, for þei louen noþing but þat þt þei haue likyng of, nouȝt þt likeþ God.[51]

What Pandarus likes is the game of courtly love, and the kind of advice that this "good counselor" will give is coloured by such things as his vow to keep secret any and all of Troilus's affairs even if those affairs include adultery and the betrayal of Troilus's own brother:

And of o thyng right siker maistow be,
That certein, for to dyen in the peyne,
That I shal nevere mo discoveren the;
Ne, by my trouthe, I kepe nat restreyne
The fro thi love, theigh that it were Eleyne
That is thi brother wif, if ich it wiste:
Be what she be, and love hire as the liste! (1.673-679)

Pandarus's counsel will further degenerate into a mere set of machinations aimed at furthering his game, and he will do grave injustices to Troilus and Criseyde and also to the whole of the city.

[51] Vices and Virtues 189.

Pandarus's special mode of imprudence is multivalent and complex. Not only does he give bad counsel, but he gives bad counsel in such a way as to be a bad friend. By taking advantage of friendships in various ways, Pandarus's actions are inconsistent with the cardinal virtue of justice. But Pandarus's injustices extend beyond the circle of his friends: there is no evidence, for instance, that Poliphete is planning a new lawsuit against Criseyde, but it suits Pandarus's game to have her seek the protection of Deiphobus. Pandarus merely wants to arrange a first meeting for Troilus and Criseyde at which no suspicion can be cast on either of them. His plot is to have them encounter each other at Deiphobus's house where members of the royal family will be joined to offer Criseyde protection from Poliphete's harassment.

Pandarus is a shrewd enough judge of character to know that Criseyde, already afraid for her life except for the protection of Hector (1.92-126), will seek out new protectors in the event of new dangers. But we have every reason to doubt the reality of these new dangers. Our first knowledge of Poliphete's lawsuit comes when Pandarus warns Criseyde that new suits are going to be initiated:

> Be ye naught war how false Poliphete
> Is now aboute eftsones for to plete,
> And brynge on yow advocacies newe? (2.1467-69)

We do not hear if Poliphete's first suit was successful or not, but we do find out that Poliphete has previously acted as a front for Antenor and Aeneas. Criseyde responds,

> What is he more aboute, me to drecche
> And don me wrong? What shal I doon, allas?
> Yet of hymself nothing ne wolde I recche,
> Nere it for Antenor and Eneas,
> That ben his frendes in swich manere cas. (2.1471-75)

Antenor and Aeneas, who will ultimately betray the city, are now, albeit accidentally, implicated in the idea that there might be a lawsuit. Pandarus has terrified Criseyde with the threat of new lawsuits, but now he seeks to calm her:

> "Nay," quod Pandare, "it shal nothing be so.
> For I have ben right now at Deiphebus,
> At Ector, and myn oother lordes moo,
> And shortly maked ech of hem his foo,
> That, by my thrift, he shal it nevere wynne,
> For aught he kan, whan that so he bygynne." (2.1479-84)

We also learn here that no lawsuit has actually been initiated. If we have any doubt that there ever was a lawsuit, such doubts are dispelled when Pandarus goes to Troilus to reveal the deceitful means by which the meeting has been arranged:

> Whan this was don, this Pandare up anon,
> To telle in short, and forth gan for to wende
> To Troilus, as stille as any ston;
> And al this thyng he tolde hym, word and ende,
> And how that he Deiphebus gan to blende. (2.1492-96)

Antenor and Aeneas, powerful lords in their own right, have been made the enemies of the royal family, "ech of hem his foo." Although we hear no more of lawsuits in the poem, we must speculate whether any action was subsequently taken against Antenor and Aeneas.

Dictys reports that the Trojan nobility, on the death of Paris, plotted to return Helen to the Greeks, and they sent Antenor to fetch her. Deiphobus, hearing of this plot, carried Helen off and married her himself. It was immediately after this incident that Antenor decided to betray Troy, so that, in one branch of the tradition, Antenor betrays Troy partly out of hatred for Deiphobus.[52] If Deiphobus harasses

[52] Dictys 100-101.

Antenor over a non-existent lawsuit, Antenor may already understand that his interests are not served by the rulers of his city. If we can be permitted to look to the metastructure of the poem in our understanding of it, it is a plausible supposition that Pandarus's machinations have contributed materially to the betrayal of Troy. At the very least, Pandarus has done an injustice to a powerful Trojan noble in alienating him from the Trojan royal family. He has acted unjustly solely to arrange a clandestine meeting for the lovers.

The virtue of justice is the most complex and discussed of the four cardinal virtues. Justice, as it is commonly understood, concerns right and equity. It is the mean between deficiency and excess. Justice is incomplete as a virtue if the right of the individual alone is satisfied: the just not only receive justice but must act justly towards others. Justice is the virtue through which all social relationships should be mediated, either directly through customary usage, or indirectly through laws. Like prudence, it is directed primarily towards the common good. Prudence, through right reason, directs and governs the other virtues, but justice contains all virtues because it is right reason.

Cicero describes justice as "habitus animi communi utilitate conservata suam cuique tribuens dignitatem" and he names its parts as "religio, pietas, gratia, vindicatio, observantia et veritas."[53] Justice, according to Cicero, originates in nature and eventually receives the support of custom, law and religion. He describes the parts thus:

[53] De Invent. 2.53.160. "[Justice is] a habit of mind by which the common advantage is preserved and is also granted to the individual." Its parts are "religion, piety, gratitude, establishment of right, reverence and truth."

> Religio est, quae superioris cuiusdam naturae, quam divinam vocant, curam caerimoniamque affert; pietas, per quam sanguine coniunctis patriaeque benivolum officium et diligens tribuitur cultus; gratia, in qua amicitiarum et officiorum alterius memoria et remunerandi voluntas continetur; vindicatio, per quam vis aut iniuria et omnino omne, quod obfuturum est, defendendo aut ulciscendo propulsatur; observantia, per quam homines aliqua dignitate antecedentes cultu quodam et honore dignantur; veritas, per quam immutata ea, quae sunt [ante] aut fuerunt aut futura sunt, dicuntur.[54]

Macrobius, on the other hand, gives a somewhat different list of parts. He lists innocentia, amicitia, concordia, pietas, religio, affectus and humanitas.[55] Thomas Aquinas accepts both lists of parts by his usual procedure of considering parts from each list under more general conceptual headings, in this case, according to whether the part refers to declining from doing evil or to positively doing good.[56]

But, for our understanding of Pandarus's character and the injustices he commits, we need only concern ourselves with the general concepts of amicitia and veritas. Pandarus's violation of truth is obvious so far. He commits a compound injustice by first lying to

[54] De Invent. 2.53.161-62. "Religio is that which is something of a superior nature, which men call divine, and which is supported with care and ceremony; piety is that through which the conjunction of family and country are rendered friendly duty and faithful service; gratitude is that in which the memory and rewards of friendship and other duties are freely embraced; the establishment of right is that through which either violence or injury or wrong and any other harm altogether, which is to come, is either defended against or punished or repelled; reverence, through which men, by merit of preceding service and by a certain esteem, are honoured; truth is that through which things in the past or the present or the future are spoken of without change to them [that is, without altering their material facts]."

[55] Som. Scip. 1.8.7-8. "Integrity or uprightness, friendship, concord, piety, religion, love and human sympathy."

[56] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q80.A1.

Criseyde about a lawsuit, and then by falsely implicating Poliphete, Antenor and Aeneas in it. But Pandarus is consistent in his violations of truth not only with strangers, but also with his friends.

Pandarus's part in the whole of the love affair, from his initial intervention in Book I to the affair's consummation in Book III, represents a complex nexus of dissimulation and violations of the idea of amicitia. The idea of amicitia was defined for the Middle Ages largely by Cicero. Friends, he says, exist in a stable relationship of equals who are equal, regardless of social rank, insofar as they are friends. Although Cicero, unlike Macrobius and Thomas, does not name amicitia as a part of justice, he says friends stand in a relationship that resembles justice:

> Aequitate iustitaque gaudebunt, omniaque alter pro altero suscipiet, neque quicquam umquam nisi honestum et rectum alter ab altero postulabit, neque solum colent inter se ac diligent, sed etiam verebuntur.[57]

By offering to serve Troilus to the extent, for instance, that he will aid and abet adultery and the betrayal of Troilus's brother, or that he will arrange for the persecution of nobles for a narrow and unworthy purpose, Pandarus accepts demands on the friendship which ought to be unacceptable:

> In iis perniciosus est error, qui existumant lubidinum peccatorumque omnium patere in amicitia licentiam; virtutum amicitia adiutrix a natura data est, non vitiorum comes, ut, quoniam solitaria non posset virtus ad ea, quae summa sunt,

[57] Cicero, Laelius: De Amicitia, ed. K. Simbeck, Scholarum in Usum Scripta Selecta (Leipzig: Teubneri, 1928) 22.82. "They rejoice in equity and justice, and support one another in all things; they will not demand anything of one another at any time except what is moral and right; they not only cherish and love one another, but they also esteem one another."

pervenire, coniuncta et consociata cum altera perveniret.[58] Pandarus has thus offered not only to betray Troilus's brother, but to betray his friendship with Troilus as well. Pandarus can hardly be said to be offering to act as a servant of virtue in such an instance.

For Cicero, friendship is predicated on the virtue that one friend detects in another, and on the identity that one detects between one's own virtue and the virtue of the friend. In the Middle Ages the whole Ciceronian notion of amicitia was extended to include a kind of spiritual friendship which is opposed to amor carnalis, "love of the flesh."[59] As Lee Patterson says, medieval commentators understand that "human friendship is both a model of and a way to divine love, an early stage of the ascent and an encouraging prefiguration of the goal."[60] It is therfore significant that Troilus's offer of love to Criseyde is presented in this form:

> Quod Troilus, "O goodly, fresshe free,
> That with the stremes of youre eyen cleere
> Ye wolde somtyme frendly on me see,
> And thanne agreen that I may ben he,
> Withouten braunche of vice on any wise,
> In trouthe alwey to don yow my servise,
>
> "As to my lady right and chief resort,
> With al my wit and al my diligence." (3.128-135)

[58] De amicitia 22.82-83. "It is a pernicious error in those who reckon every lust, every sin and every licence to be available in friendship; friendship was given by nature as a handmaid of virtue, not a companion of vice; because virtue is not able to achieve its highest goals by itself, it achieves them in conjunction and union with others."

[59] De amicitia 27.100. For this discussion, see also Patterson 115-153; and Alan T. Gaylord, "Friendship in Chaucer's Troilus," Chaucer Review 3 (1969): 239-264.

[60] Patterson 134.

Troilus, despite the excesses of his passion for Criseyde, initially only asks for friendship, and he seems quite content with this very thing, until Pandarus creates the opportunity to consummate the affair in amor carnalis. The genuine purity of Troilus's love may be suggested by the phrase "withouten braunche of vice." Medieval treatises on the seven vices and virtues, such as the "Parson's Tale" or related texts like the Somme le roi, typically explicate the subdivisions of vice and virtue in their "branches."

Troilus, as we say, seems content with amicitia. He exchanges letters and has brief meetings with Criseyde, and he seems to ask no more. The narrator says that, in a state very much of friendship, Troilus and Criseyde are "stondyng in concord and in quiete" (3.505-508). But Troilus, although he takes no initiative in moving his affair into carnality, is also rather too pliable when it comes to agreeing to Pandarus's plot to see the affair consummated. We read of no objection to Pandarus's plan from him, and he crosses the line between amicitia and amor carnalis rather easily.

Pandarus means to keep Criseyde at his house overnight on a pretext, and Troilus is to slip in secretly to spend the night with her. The fires of passion are to be stoked with Troilus's feigned anguish at some cooked-up story about Criseyde's alleged infidelity. It is an extraordinary game in which all three pretend to deceive each other. Troilus does not fall into this scene unawares. He "mad gret ordinaunce" (3.535) to have his whereabouts accounted for on this night, and he is well-rehearsed in his feigned jealousy. The narrator notes that his "auctor" does not say whether Criseyde believes Pandarus when he says that Troilus is out of town (3.575-78), leaving open the dis-

tinct possibility that she is a willing and witting partner to the plot. Criseyde, for her part, merely instructs her uncle to "loke that al be well, and do now as yow liste" (3.587).

Ironically, the plot succeeds just as it fails. Troilus is pained by the anguish he has caused Criseyde with his feigned allegations of Criseyde's infidelity, and he admits to the deception. Here he is humiliated: after submitting to Criseyde's lecture on the false relationship of jealousy and love, the greatest warrior in Troy save Hector, and the king's son, falls into a swoon of remorse, and must be revived by Pandarus and Criseyde. Despite the evident pain caused by the deceptions within deceptions, everything seems to turn out right in the end. Troilus and Criseyde do end up spending a blissful night together. But the means to this end has been deception, and the end itself represents a fall from amicitia to amor carnalis. Although all three are culpable in this situation, it is Pandarus who has initiated both an injustice to his friends and a complex injustice to truth.

Criseyde is, as we have noted, in a precarious position within the city. She has had lawsuits against her, and whether she is justified in her fears or not, she fears for her very life without the protection of Hector and the rest of the royal family. To be fair, none of the protagonists could have foreseen the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor, but neither has any of them foreseen the possibility that Troilus might be called upon to defend Criseyde for some other reason. This is not an unreasonable level of prudence to expect from any of them. But none of them has taken Troilus's passionate, intemperate nature into account, and none of them has realized that, whenever it would become necessary

for Troilus to declare himself in Criseyde's defence, Troilus would thus not be able to separate his role as friend from his role as lover.

Alan Gaylord has made this very observation in his analysis of friendship as a topic in Troilus and Criseyde. Gaylord notes that Pandarus has convinced Criseyde that she has nothing to fear in entertaining the love affair by reminding her that she has a right, clearly established by social custom, to meet Troilus as a friend. As we know, Troilus remains silent in the parliament while the debate rages over whether to exchange Criseyde for Antenor. Gaylord reminds us that Troilus openly pledged his friendship to Criseyde at the dinner at Deiphobus's, and he says,

> without a doubt he has previously pledged to be a friend to Criseyde; his obligations to her are as capable of clear and vigorous expression as they were with Hector. He has the unambiguous right, from a public point of view, to announce this friendship, to remind the other lords of theirs, and to provide leadership in parliament for her defense. This would be as much his office as Hector's. By this time, however, he has totally abdicated his lordly offices and forgotten his "love of frendshipe" to become a servant of Love.[61]

Once again, the simplest injustices that Pandarus performs assume monumental proportions in terms of the life of the whole city. By betraying both friendship and truth, by facilitating Troilus and Criseyde's transition from amicitia to amor carnalis, Pandarus again shares responsibility for the betrayal and destruction of Troy.

From the standpoint of a moral commentary, Criseyde is probably the simplest of the characters in Troilus and Criseyde. Pandarus's injustices towards Criseyde are especially reprehensible since they

[61] Gaylord 259.

inspire fear in her, and it is fear which undermines her will to be constant. Criseyde, in contrast to Troilus, appears to have a strong will of her own, but it is a will that is curiously vacillating nonetheless. In one particular respect, Criseyde is her father's daughter. Like Calchas, she is inconstant, and her inconstancy is based largely on personal advantage. But unlike Calchas, her inconstancy does not arise from a certain knowledge of the outcome of events and a firm resolve to take a new course. Rather, Criseyde shows herself susceptible to every new pressure that she encounters.

Criseyde's movement through the poem nearly mirrors Troilus's own career. But where Troilus moves from "wo to wele, and after out of joie," Criseyde first betrays her resolve to remain in chaste widowhood and then betrays her lover for another lover. Where Troilus moves from woe to partial joy to a more complete joy to woe, Criseyde moves from chaste widowhood to amicitia to amor carnalis to betrayal. Her shifts are subtle and taken in slow graduations that almost mirror the steps necessary to prudence or to taking good counsel. But one of her prime motivations is fear, and she does not act by doing what is right, but by doing only whatever is necessary to ease her fears.

C. S. Lewis is right to identify fear, her "slydyng of corage," as Criseyde's "ruling passion": "fear of loneliness, of old age, of death, of love of hostility; of everything, indeed, that can be feared."[62] Chauncey Wood is also right, in a moral sense, to relate this fear to the virtue of fortitude. Wood also adds the observation that, as she herself confesses, Criseyde lacks prudence. Wood's argument is astute

[62] Lewis 185.

and careful, but he argues as if prudence and fortitude were separate virtues. But, just as Troilus's imprudence is manifested through his intemperance, and Pandarus's is manifested through his injustice, Criseyde's imprudence is manifested through her lack of fortitude.

Fortitude is the cardinal virtue which gives one the strength to act virtuously. Indeed, it is often referred to simply as "strength" by medieval commentators. Just as temperance rectifies the reason by making concupiscible passions ordinate, fortitude rectifies reason by making the irascible passions, especially fear, ordinate. Without either virtue, prudence and justice are impossible. According to Thomas, fortitude is concerned chiefly with curbing fear and moderating daring.[63] Daring should be moderated since some things ought to be feared, like pain and death, but not feared so much as to lead into mortal sin. Martyrdom, for instance, comes from choosing death over mortal sin, and it is not, therefore, imprudent, but an act of fortitude. Fear is also sinful insofar as it leads one away from reason. Fear is a vice opposed to fortitude but only insofar as it is inordinate:

> Ratio autem dictat aliqua esse fugienda, et aliqua esse prosequenda; et inter fugienda, quaedam dictat magis esse fugienda quam alia; et similiter est prosequenda, quaedam dictat esse magis prosequenda quam alia; et quantum est bonum prosequendum, tantum est aliquod oppositum malum fugiendum. Inde est quod ratio dictat quaedam bona magis esse prosequenda quam quaedam mala fugienda. Quando ergo appetitus fugit ea quae ratio dictat esse sustinenda ne desistat ab aliis quae magis prosequi debet, timor inordinatus est, et habet rationem peccati. Quando vero appetitus timendo refugit, tunc appetitus non est inordinatus, nec peccatum.[64]

[63] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q123.A3.

[64] Summa Theo. 2-2.Q125.A1. "Reason dicates that some things should be fled and other things should be sought; and between things to be shunned, reason sometimes dictates that some things should be shunned more than others; and simililarly reason dictates that some things

No one could or would find fault with Criseyde if she remained constant in her chaste widowhood. But Criseyde changes her state partly out of fear. We have already seen her seeking both Hector and Deiphobus's protection because of her fears. Her decision to entertain Pandarus's proposals at all is motivated by fear in several ways. First, she fears what Pandarus will say to her when he first begins to broach the subject:

> "Now, good em, for Goddes love, I preye,"
> Quod she, "come of, and telle me what it is!
> For both I am agast what ye wol seye." (2.309-311)

When Pandarus announces that both he and Troilus will die unless Criseyde shows Troilus some grace,

> Criseyde, which that wel neigh starf for feere,
> So as she was the ferfulleste wight
> That myghte be, and herde ek with hire ere
> And saugh the sorwful ernest of the knyght,
> And in his preier ek saugh noon unryght,
> And for the harm that myghte ek fallen moore,
> She gan to rewe, and dredde hire wonder soore. (2.449-55)

As she considers Pandarus's proposal, alone in her closet, she reflects for some time and still cannot determine if she has good reason for her fears. She

> Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought
> Of peril why she ought afered be. (2.605-606)

---

should be sought more than others; and by the amount a good should be sought, by such a measure the opposite evil should be shunned. It follows that reason dictates that some goods are to be sought more than some evils are to be avoided. When, therefore, the appetite flees that which reason dictates should be endured, and it does not desist from other things which we would rather have sought, fear is inordinate and reason is sinful. When the true appetite fears so that it shuns [what should be shunned], this appetite is neither inordinate nor sinful."

While she is debating with herself, she sees Troilus ride back from battle, and she is suddenly taken with him. She continues her debate, and, though she waxes hot and cold, she views a possible affair most favourably once she has made this observation:

> Ek wel woot I my kynges sone is he,
> And sith he hath to se me swich delit,
> If I wolde outreliche his sighte flee,
> Peraunter he myghte have me in dispit,
> Thorugh whicch I myghte stonde in worse plit.
> Now were I wis, me hate to purchace,
> Withouten nede, ther I may stonde in grace? (2.708-714)

Criseyde herself considers that her widowhood is a virtuous state, and one which she is resolved to maintain. When Pandarus asks her if she is involved in a love affair, she is forthright in saying that

> I am to no man holden, trewely,
> So muche as yow, and have so litel quyt;
> And with the grace of God, emforth my wit,
> As in my gylt I shal yow nevere offende;
> And if I have er this, I wol amende. (2.241-245)

Clearly, she does not wish to offend her uncle with any action that would leave her guilty, and yet her fears contribute to her giving up this virtuous resolve. It is a dubious proposition whether her fear of Troilus's "dispit" justifies her sacrifice of virtue. She also admits that no woman can be held responsible for a man falling in love with her. Thus, if Troilus dies for love of her, she will not be responsible for his death. If Troilus dies, it will be as a result of his own intemperate passions. It is also morally dubious if she gives up her virtue to prevent a death which is itself caused by vice.

The weakening of her resolve refers to the vice opposed to the part of fortitude called perseverantia by Cicero and constantia by Macrobius.[65] Criseyde's inconstancy is just as typical of her character as

[65] De Invent. 2.53.162-63; Som. Scip. 1.8.7. "Perseverance" and

her fears. Rather than reply to Pandarus's threats with a firm declaration of her resolve to remain a chaste widow, she is unconvinced by her own insight that she is not responsible for Troilus, and she allows her fears to move her into the game:

> And thoughte thus: "Unhappes fallen thikke
> Alday for love, and in swych manere cas
> As men ben cruel in hemself and wikke;
> And if this man sle here hymself—allas!—
> In my presence, it wol be no solas.
> What men wolde of hit deme I kan nat seye;
> It nedeth me ful sleighly for to pleie." (2.456-462)

The narrator suggests that her initial inconstancy was not sudden, but gradual, and that the implication is that gradualness somehow must mitigate her decision. There is, nevertheless, a change in her purposes, and one that undermines her heart:

> For I sey nought that she so sodeynly
> Yaf hym hire love, but that she gan enclyne
> To like hym first, and I have told yow whi;
> And after that, his manhod and his pyne
> Made love withinne hire herte for to myne,
> For which, by proces and by good servyse
> He gat hire love, and in no sodeyn wyse. (2.673-679)

But the change is not nearly as gradual as the narrator asserts. So suddenly is she overwhelmed by Troilus that she asks "Who yaf me drynke?" (2.651).

We have already seen her complicity in the change from amicitia to amor carnalis. It is in this state that she is again resolved as firmly as she was resolved at first to be a chaste widow and, then, a true friend. When the parliament decides to send her to Calchas in exchange

---

"constancy," respectively.

for Antenor, Criseyde reassures Troilus of the firmness of her love for him and the strength of her resolve to return to him:

> For thilke day that I for cherisynge
> Or drede of fader, or of other wight,
> Or for estat, delit, or for weddynge,
> Be fals to yow, my Troilus, my knyght,
> Saturnes doughter, Juno, thorugh hire myght,
> As wood as Athamante do me dwelle
> Eternalich in Stix, the put of helle! (4.1534-40)

In the Greek camp for little more than two weeks, and she has already fallen prey to Diomede's wooing of her. She writes to Troilus, sending what is perhaps the most painful message one can receive from an absent lover. She assures him of her eternal friendship:

> Come I wole; but yet in swich disjoynte
> I stonde as now that what yer or what day
> That this shal be, that kan I naught apoynte.
> But in effect I pray yow, as I may,
> Of youre good word and of youre frendship ay;
> For trewely, while that my lif may dure,
> As for a frend ye may in me assure. (5.1618-24)

The shift back to <u>amicitia</u> is, of course, as false as any of her resolves for she will now have no more to do with Troilus and everything to do with Diomede. Criseyde lacks the courage to return to Troilus and the constancy to remain true to him. Her great imprudence has been not to recognize that she is, and always has been, "slydyng of corage." Had she recognized this basic fact about herself, she might have been more diligent in finding a legitimate means of avoiding the exchange for Antenor.

We began this paper by noting Crisyede's lament for her prudence while she is in the Greek camp:

> Prudence, allas, oon of thyne eyen thre
> Me lakked alwey, er that I come here!
> On tyme ypassed wel remembred me,
> And present tyme ek koud ich wel ise,
> But future tyme, er I was in the snare,

Koude I nat sen; that causeth now my care. - (5.744-749)

She is quite correct in her view that she, unlike her father, is unable to foresee the outcome of her actions. This lament is all the more pitiful in that it comes after she has betrayed Troilus and has no hope of returning to Troy. If she had had these sentiments at any time before the parliament met to debate her exchange, she would not now be making this lament.

Chauncey Wood is correct when he asserts that to lack any of the eyes of Prudence is to lack prudence altogether.[66] Criseyde lacks the eye that looks to the future, but do Pandarus and Troilus also each lack an eye? Troilus is young and has never encountered the force of the passion that can brought on by love. Although he acquires experience enough as the poem progresses, he is never able to recognize that his passion leads him first into amor carnalis and then to betrayal and then to his own death. He never puts to good use his experience of his consistent abrogation of princely duties in favour of love. He is led from disaster to disaster and never realizes that it is not fate or Fortune that leads him, but the subsuming of his own will under passion. He lacks the eye that looks to the past.

For his part, Pandarus does not understand the nature of Troilus's passion, and the proper remedy for it. Rather than helping Troilus bring his passion under control, he merely eggs it on to new heights. On the other hand, he understands Criseyde's fears perfectly well, but instead of trying to assuage them, he exacerbates them so that he can bend her to the needs of his game. Pandarus commits the most outrageous

[66] Wood 131.

of follies in respect to his city, not realizing in the moment that he commits them that he has wrought the destruction of his city. He sees not a city at war and under siege, but a love affair in what is before his very eyes.

Troilus lacks the eye that looks to the past. Pandarus lacks the eye that understands the present. Criseyde lacks the eye that foresees the future. None of them is prudent, and their particular failures in prudence bring about Troilus's "double sorwe" and the fall of Troilus and Criseyde in the midst of the fall of imprudent Troy.

Conclusion

If Troilus is powerless before Fortune and fate, it is because, paradoxically, that is what he has chosen to be. Philosophy teaches Boethius more than simply how to endure bad Fortune. She also teaches that he is not a slave to Fortune but, rather, he possesses a free will within God's providence to act as his reason dictates. It is an essential precondition of prudent action that we believe that we have the free will to act within the sphere of practical life. If we do not believe that we are free to act, then we give up all moral responsibility for our actions and we become mere chaff, to be blown as the winds of Fortune would blow us. But since Fortune is an illusion, as Philosophy also teaches, we become, not the victims of Fortune, but the creatures of our passions or the creatures of others who may exploit us as they please.

If Criseyde is powerless before her fears, it is because she chooses any course which will assuage her immediate fears, even if it will lead her to things more to be feared. Prudence teaches Melibee that he has more to fear from taking vengeance than he does he does from the pains of virtuous behavior, but there is no one to teach Criseyde that she has more to fear from inconstancy and betrayal than she does from resistance to sin. Criseyde fears Troilus's "dispit" more than she fears the loss of her virtue; she fears the exposure of her affair more than she fears losing Troilus; she fears the journey back to Troy more than she fears the death of Troilus. It is an essential precondition of prudence that we have the strength of will to resist our fears so that we can act rightly. Lacking that strength, Criseyde becomes the crea-

ture of her fears and the creature of Pandarus who exploits her as he pleases.

Pandarus has both the will and the strength of will to execute his game as he pleases. But the uses to which he puts his will amount to a willful moral blindness. Failing to appreciate the depth of Troilus's passion, failing to appreciate the depth of Criseyde's inconstancy, and failing to understand how the one will play on the other, Pandarus's machinations lead by gentle gradations to Troilus's death. It is an essential precondition of prudence that our actions towards others be guided by a clear-sighted right reason. If we act with a willful blindness towards the needs of others, we can only do them harm, a harm which will eventually rebound upon ourselves. Lacking clear-sightedness, Pandarus allows himself to become the creature of his own game.

It is because each of the protagonists is each lacking in one of the cardinal virtues that none of them is prudent. But the virtues are reciprocal. Christine de Pisan, as we will recall, said that "prudence and wisdome be moderis and conditoures of all vertues, withoute the which the tothir may not be well gouernyd." It is also because each of the protagonists is imprudent that they lack the other virtues.

Such a rigorous application of the topos of the four cardinal virtues may seem reductionist except that it goes to the very motivations of the main characters of the poem, and it admits as much of the psychological realism and complexity as can exist in medieval characters. We have not turned any of them into caricatures or mere personifications in an allegory of virtue. We should also be cognizant of the varieties of imprudence practiced by each of the protagonists. Troilus is not only intemperate, but he is negligent in examining his

friends and by taking counsel improperly. Negligence is itself a vice of imprudence and so is taking bad counsel. Pandarus more than once refers to Troilus's "slouthe," the vice opposed to fortitude. Pandarus gives bad counsel, and he asserts that counsel may be taken from fools and evil men, of which he is both. Criseyde, of course, consistently fails to see the consequences of her sliding from one fear to the next, and she practices injustice in her betrayals. But the principal topical features of each of their characters ultimately reside in Troilus's intemperance, Pandarus's injustice and Criseyde's lack of fortitude. Armed with this topos, we are not in the least surprised by the moral censure that concludes the poem.

Works Cited

Adamson, Jane. "The Unity of Troilus and Criseyde." Critical Review 14 (1971): 17-37.

Albertanus of Brescia. Liber Consolationis et Consilii Ex Quo Hausta Est Fabula Gallica De Melibeo et Prudentia. Ed. Thor Sundby. Chaucer Society Second Series 8. London: N. Trübner, for the Chaucer Society, 1873.

Ambrose. De Officiis Ministrorum. Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi: Opera Omnia. Patrologiae Latinae 16. Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, n.d.

Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Trans. H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. London: Heinemann, 1958.

Barlow, Claude W. Introduction. "The Rules for an Honest Life." By Martin of Braga. Trans. Claude W. Barlow. The Fathers of the Church: Iberian Fathers. Washington: Catholic U of America P, 1962.

Baron, F. Xavier. "Chaucer's Troilus and Self-Renunciation in Love." Papers on Language and Literature 10 (1974): 5-14.

Baum, Paull F. Chaucer: A Critical Appreciation. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1958.

Blake, Norman. The English Language in Medieval Literature. London: Methuen, 1979.

---. Introduction. Middle English Religious Prose. Ed. Norman F. Blake. York Medieval Texts. London: Edward Arnold, 1972.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. Il Decameron. Ed. Eduardo Sanguineti. With a commentary by Attilio Momigliano. Collezione Di Scolastica Di Classici Italiani. Turin: G.B. Petrini, 1959.

---. The Decameron. Trans. G. H. McWilliam. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.

Boethius. Consolatio Philosophiae. Ed. James J. O'Donnell. Bryn Mawr Latin Commentaries. Bryn Mawr: Thomas Library, 1984.

The Book of The Knight of La Tour-Landry. Ed. Thomas Wright. Early English Text Society Original Series 33. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, for the Early English Text Society, 1868.

The Book of Vices and Virtues: A Fourteenth Century English Translation of the Somme le Roi of Lorens D'Orleans. Ed. W. Nelson Francis. Early English Text Society Original Series 217. London: Oxford UP, for the Early English Text Society, 1942.

Bornstein, Diane. "Chaucer's 'Tale of Melibee' as an Example of the Style Clergial." Chaucer Review 12 (1978): 236-54.

Brown, Emerson. "Chaucer, the Merchant, and Their Tale: Getting Beyond Old Controversies: Part I." Chaucer Review 13 (1978): 141-56.

---. "Chaucer, the Merchant, and Their Tale: Getting Beyond Old Controversies, Part II." Chaucer Review 13 (1979): 247-62.

Bühler, Curt F. Introduction. The Epistle of Othea. By Christine de Pisan. Trans. Stephen Scrope. Ed. C.F. Bühler. Early English Text Society Original Series 264. London: Oxford UP, for the Early English Text Society, 1970.

Burnley, J. D. "Proude Bayard: Troilus and Criseyde, I.218." Notes and Queries 23 (1976): 148-52.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Riverside Chaucer. Gen. ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Christine de Pisan. The Epistle of Othea. Trans. Stephen Scrope. Ed. C. F. Bühler. Early English Text Society Original Series 264. London: Oxford UP, for the Early English Text Society, 1970.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. Laelius: De Amicitia. Ed. K. Simbeck. Scholarum in Usum Scripta Selecta. Leipzig: Teubneri, 1928.

---. De Officiis. 4th ed. Ed. Hubert Ashton Holden. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1899.

---. Rhetorici Libri Duo Qvi Vocavntvr De Inventione. Ed. E. Stroebel. Stuttgart: B.G. Tevbneri, 1965.

Dante Alighieri. La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio. 3rd Ed. Ed. Daniele Mattalia. Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1984.

---. Purgatorio. Trans. L. Binyon. The Portable Dante. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977.

Deanesly, Margaret. "Vernacular Books in the 14th & 15th Centuries." Modern Languages Review 15 (1920): 349-58.

Ehrhart, Margaret J. The Judgment of the Trojan Prince Paris in Medieval Literature. Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1987.

Frazer, R. M., Jr., trans. The Trojan War: The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1966.

Gaylord, Alan T. "Friendship in Chaucer's Troilus." Chaucer Review 3 (1969): 239-64.

The "Gest Hystoriale" of the Destruction of Troy. Ed. George A. Panton and David Donaldson. Early English Text Society Original Series 39 & 56. London: Trübner, for the Early English Text Society, 1869, 1874.

Gower, John. Vox Clamantis. The Complete Works of John Gower. 4 Vols. Ed. G. C. Macaulay. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1902.

Graves, Robert. The Greek Myths. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960.

Green, Richard Firth. Poets and Prince Pleasers: Literature and The Court in The Late Middle Ages. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1980.

---. "Troilus and the Game of Love." Chaucer Review 13 (1979): 201-20.

Hartung, Albert E. "A Study of the Textual Affiliations of Chaucer's Melibeus Considered in Its Relation to the French Source." DA, Lehigh 1957. 2259-60. Cited in Palomo.

Hoccleve, Thomas. The Regement of Princes. Ed. F.J. Furnivall. Early English Text Society Extra Series 72. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., for the Early English Text Society, 1897.

Hoffman, Richard L. "Chaucer's Melibee and Tales of Sondry Folk." Classica et Mediaevalia 30 (1969): 552-77.

Kearney, Milo, and Mimosa Schraer. "The Flaw in Troilus." Chaucer Review 22.3 (1988): 185-91.

Lawler, Traugott. "Chaucer." Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres. Ed. A. S. G. Edwards. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1984. 291-314.

Lewis, C. S. The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition. New York: Oxford UP, 1958.

Lydgate, John. The Fall of Princes. Ed. Henry Bergen. 4 Vols. Early English Text Society Extra Series 121-124. London: Oxford UP, for the Early English Text Society, 1924.

MacDougall, Hugh A. Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons. Montreal: Harvest House; Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1982.

Macrobius, Ambrosius Theodosius. Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis. Ed. Iacobus Willis. Leipzig: Bibliothecae Teuberniae, 1953.

---. Saturnalia. Ed. Iacobus Willis. Leipzig: Bibliothecae Teuberniae, 1953.

Martin, June H. Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto And, the Parody of the Courtly Lover. London: Tamesis, 1972.

Martin of Braga. "Formula Honestæ Vitæ." Pelagii II, Joannis III, Benedicti I: Summorum Pontificum Opera Omnia: Interniscentur S. Martini, Etc. Patrologiae Latinae 72. Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, n.d. 22-27.

Matthews, Lloyd J. "Chaucer's Personification of Prudence in Troilus (V.743-749): Sources in the Visual Arts and Manuscript Scholia." English Language Notes 13 (1976): 249-55.

McDonald, Donald. "Proverbs, Sententiae, and Exempla in Chaucer's Comic Tales: The Function of Comic Misapplication." Speculum 41 (1966): 453-65.

Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979.

Oizumi, Akio. "On Collocated Words in Chaucer's Translation of Le Livre de Mellibee et de Prudence: A Stylistic Comparison of the English Translation with the French Version." Studies in English Literature (Tokyo) 13.1 (1971): 196-97.

Osberg, Richard H. "Between the Motion and the Act: Intentions and Ends in Chaucer's Troilus." ELH 48.2 (1981): 257-70.

Owen, Charles A., Jr. "The Tale of Melibee." Chaucer Review 7 (1973): 267-80.

Palomo, Dolores. "What Chaucer Really Did to the Le Livre de Melibee." Philological Quarterly 53 (1974): 304-20.

Patterson, Lee W. Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987.

Payer, Pierre J. "Prudence and The Principles of Natural Law: A Medieval Development." Speculum 54 (1979): 55-70.

Pieper, Josef. The Four Cardinal Virtues. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1966.

Plato. Symposium. Opera. 4 Vols. Ed. Ioannes Burnet. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1910.

Plato. Symposium. The Dialogues of Plato. 3rd ed. Trans. B. Jowett. London: Oxford UP, 1892.

Rabanus Maurus. Glossa Ordinaria. Patrologiae Latinae 113. Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, n.d. 1081-82.

Reese, James M. "Wisdom of Solomon." Harper's Bible Commentary. Gen. Ed. James L. Mays. San Francisco: Harper, 1988.

Ruggiers, Paul G. "Serious Chaucer: The Tale of Melibeus and the Parson's Tale." Chaucerian Problems and Perspectives: Essays Presented to Paul E. Beichner C.S.C. Eds. Edward Vasta and Zacharias P. Thundy. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1979. 83-94.

Schibanoff, Susan. "Prudence and Artificial Memory in Chaucer's Troilus." ELH 42 (1975): 507-17.

Schlauch, Margaret. "The Art of Chaucer's Prose." Chaucer and Chaucerians. Ed. D. S. Brewer. London: Nelson, 1966. 163-66.

---. "Chaucer's Prose Rhythms." PMLA 65 (1950): 568-89.

Severs, J. Burke, ed. and introd. "The Tale of Melibeus." Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Gen. ed. W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1941. 560-614.

Seznec, Jean. The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art. Trans. Barbara F. Sessions. Bollingen Series 38. New York: Pantheon, 1953.

Silvia, Daniel S. "Some Fifteenth-Century Manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales." Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins. Ed. Beryl Rowland. London: Unwin, 1974. 153-63.

Smalley, Beryl. English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960.

Stevens, Martin. "And Venus Laugheth: An Interpretation of the 'Merchant's Tale'." Chaucer Review 7 (1972): 118-31.

Sundby, Thor. Introduction. Liber Consolationis et Consilii Ex Quo Hausta Est Fabula Gallica De Melibeo et Prudentia. By Albertanus of Brescia. Ed. Thor Sundby. Chaucer Society Second Series 8. London: Trübner for the Chaucer Society, 1873. v-xxi.

Thomas Aquinas. Summa Theologiae. Ed. Petri Caramello. 3 Vols. Rome: Marietti, 1952.

Tolkien, J. R. R., and E. V. Gordon, eds. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. 2nd Ed. London: Oxford UP, 1968.

Tuve, Rosemund. Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966.

Wack, Mary F. Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and Its Commentaries. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1990.

---. "Lovesickness in Troilus." Pacific Coast Philology 19.1-2 (1984): 55-61.

Waterhouse, Ruth, and Gwen Griffiths. "'Sweete Wordes' of Non-sense: The Deconstruction of the Moral Melibee, (Part I)." Chaucer Review 23 (1989): 338-61.

---. "'Sweete Wordes' of Non-sense: The Deconstruction of the Moral Melibee, (Part II)." Chaucer Review 24 (1989): 53-63.

Whittock, Trevor. A Reading of the Canterbury Tales. London: Cambridge UP, 1968.

Wind, Edgar. Pagan Mysteries in The Renaissance. 2nd Ed. London: Faber, 1967.

Wood, Chauncey. The Elements of Chaucer's Troilus. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1984.

APPENDIX:
Some Features of Rhetoric in the "Tale of Melibee"

The argument that the "Melibee" is not intended as a serious piece depends, in the main, on a belief that Chaucer has signalled his ironic intentions in the "Thopas-Melibee" link, and on a belief that the rhetoric in the "Melibee" is readily and obviously distinguishable as a "send-up" of high style. The issue is important enough that I do not wish to dismiss it summarily, and yet the argument is not directly germane to my thesis. I have therefore included some notes on rhetoric in this Appendix which address points raised in the main body of the thesis.

* * *

N. F. Blake tells us that French prose served as the model of good style for English writers throughout the fourteenth-century.[1] Close imitation of French models often led to the direct importation of French syntax, vocabulary and idioms, and the result was that the English was often rough or even unintelligible. Nevertheless, English prose of the period is marked by a literalness of translation that was thought to be elegant because its originals were thought elegant. But while the stylistic ideal was to imitate the French, English prose was not French prose, and there is a tremendous range of quality between different English examples that depends, naturally, on the quality of the French original but also depends on the attitude of the translator towards his translation, that is, whether he translated slavishly or with some sense

[1] N. F. Blake, Introduction, Middle English Religious Prose, ed. N. F. Blake, York Medieval Texts (London: Edward Arnold, 1972) 5.

of the English idiom.[2]

The clarity and care of Chaucer's translation, however stylistically exaggerated we might find it, suggests that Chaucer was a translator of the latter type. One might even suppose that if Chaucer intended a parody, he would have made his prose difficult and obscure to show off even better the triteness of Prudence's advice. Nevertheless, stylistic variation in general was so dependent on the source of a translation that it is difficult to see how a medieval audience was to tell when an ostensibly serious piece of prose was intended as a parody unless the author gave some obvious signal.

Blake has argued that the lack of a standard orthography, punctuation, and even editorial marks required that an author use all sorts of announcement formulae to be certain that a reader or hearer has understood the meaning of a reference even when the reference is to something as simple as a book title.[3] If Chaucer has not been obvious in announcing his ironic intentions in the "Melibee," then it is dubious whether he has intended irony at all. Dolores Palomo, and Ruth Waterhouse and Gwen Griffiths after her, have contended that Chaucer makes

[2] Blake Religious Prose 6.

[3] N. F. Blake, The English Language in Medieval Literature (London: Methuen, 1979) 59. One such example is in the 3 lines Chaucer requires simply to announce the title of The Dream of Scipio in The Parliament of Fowles (29-31). I have elsewhere extended Blake's conclusion to include an examination announcement and reiteration formulae that seem necessary to an oral performance of both The Parliament of Fowles and The House of Fame. Chaucer's use of such devices in his rhetoric is extensive, and, if I was to modify my stance, it would be to suggest that such formulae seem necessary to maintain an audience's orientation within a text whether it was meant to be heard or read ("'As I yow tolde': The Structure of Oral Presentation in Chaucer's Love Visions." unpublished MS, 1987).

just such an announcement in the link between "Sir Thopas" and the "Melibee."[4] Palomo's argument is based, in part, on Alfred Hartung's as yet unproved thesis about an earlier translation of the "Melibee" which Chaucer might have made, and she speculates that Chaucer's audience was familiar enough with this previous version to recognize that his revision is a send-up.[5] Thus she explains the lines in the link which, to her, "have never made sense":

> If that yow thynke I varie as in my speche,
> As thus, though that I telle somwhat moore
> Of proverbes than ye han herd bifoore
> Comprehended in this litel tretys heere. ("Melibee" 7.954-957)

One surmises that she means that Chaucer has made his second version even more ridiculous by adding proverbs not present in the first version, a pretty broad supposition that depends on the existence of a previous "Melibee" and on an unreasonable level of recognition by the audience.[6] But Palomo consistently relies on us to deduce her argument by quoting material without sufficient explanation, and she is no more

[4] Palomo 314; Ruth Waterhouse and Gwen Griffiths, "'Sweete Wordes' of Non-sense: The Deconstruction of the Moral Melibee (Part II)," Chaucer Review 24 (1989): 60.

[5] Albert E. Hartung, "A Study of the Textual Affiliations of Chaucer's Melibeus Considered in Its Relation to the French Source," DA 17 (1957): 2259-2260 (Lehigh), cited in Palomo 313-315. I am not suggesting that Hartung's thesis is incorrect—Traugott Lawler, for one, thinks that Hartung's thesis is worth pursuing—but one strains to follow Palomo's line of reasoning here. See also, Traugott Lawler, "Chaucer," Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1984), 291-314.

[6] Chaucer's additions to Renaud, however, amount to no more than a few sentences. It is unreasonable to argue that the audience would immediately recognize the difference between two versions that had changed so slightly. Since we have no "Ur-Melibee" at hand, it is impossible to say whether, or how, Chaucer changed his own version.

explicit on this point. The argument, even though cited with remarkable regularity by others, is insubstantial and ought to be dismissed.

Waterhouse and Griffiths argue throughout their long article that the existence of more than one signified for a given signifier obliterates any "single definable meaning" in the "Melibee." The signal to the audience that the tale will be ironic and parodic is that the repeated

> use of the signifier "sentence" so many times before the beginning of the tale proper inevitably raises the audience expectation that the presentation of discourse must affect the basic "sentence," that it may not be as easily accessible as one might expect, though there may be a plethora of sententious sayings.[7]

The authors seem to have understood that one possible meaning for "sentence" is "meaning," but they have not understood that this is the only sense that Chaucer has used in the "Thopas-Melibee" link, that there is no "drifting of signifiers," and certainly none so obvious as to suggest irony. Chaucer quite clearly insists that the words of a story can change while its meaning, its "signification" if you will, remains the same.

There is precious little else on which to hang the signal of irony. Waterhouse and Griffiths quote the same passage as Palomo, cited above, and assert that it is somehow evidence of the ironic drifting of signifiers, that meaning has not changed while the meaning deconstructs. They do not explain how Chaucer's audience became so familiar with any previous version of the "Melibee," French or English, that they can immediately detect the addition of a small handful of proverbs to a tale

[7] Waterhouse and Griffiths II 60.

that is already "22% quoted sententious matter."[8]

The most common contention is that the "Melibee" is parody because the rhetoric is too overwrought, the style too fine, rather than that it is poor rhetoric. Palomo, the critic most often cited in support of the parody argument, points particularly to Chaucer's heavy use of amplificatio, or "doublets" when translating Renaud's Le Livre de Mellibee as evidence of a "excessive rhetoric."[9] But Diane Bornstein provides us with a table of 149 instances of amplificatio of which 53 are direct importations of French words.[10] One questions the "heaviness" of the use of this favourite fourteenth-century strategy for elevating style when less than 150 instances can be adduced in a treatise of nearly 17,000 words.[11] In addition, Bornstein cites 34 examples where Chaucer has substituted a single term for a doublet thereby decreasing the weight of Renaud's rhetoric in many instances.

Almost none of the critics who insist that the "Melibee" is a parody compare its rhetoric to Chaucer's other prose works. We may use-

[8] Waterhouse and Griffiths I 360; Palomo 307.

[9] Palomo 310.

[10] Diane Bornstein, "Chaucer's Tale of Melibee as an Example of the Style clergial," Chaucer Review 12 (1978): 248-251. Blake Religious Prose 5. The importation of a French word and then doubling it was a typical way of using amplificatio. See also, Akio Oizumi, "On Collocated Words in Chaucer's Translation of Le Livre de Mellibee et de Prudence: A Stylistic Comparison of the English Translation with the French Version, Studies in English Literature (Tokyo), 13.1 (1971): 97. Oizumi notes that Chaucer introduces a French word into English and glosses it with an English word in the "Melibee," Boece, Troilus and Criseyde, in the lyrics and elsewhere in the Canterbury Tales. It seems to have been a favourite rhetorical device.

[11] Palomo (312) counts 180 "doublets," which hardly undermines my point.

fully compare two rhetorical elements in the "Melibee" to the same elements in the other prose tale in the Canterbury Tales, the "Parson's Tale."[12] If we extend our examination beyond amplification to include more generalized forms of parallelism and balance, and if we take the simplest forms of parallelism in both tales, collocates up to three words before and after the conjunctions "and" and "or," we find that 10.7% of the "Parson," and 12.5% of the "Melibee", consists of words used in co-ordinate parallelism. Finally, Palomo's complaints about the excessive prolixity of the "Melibee" do not bear scrutiny. Glossing passages which begin "that [or 'this'] is to seyn" account for 2.7% of the "Melibee"'s words. Compare this to the "Parson's Tale," which is not generally thought to be a parody, where the identical type of gloss accounts for 2.2% of the text.[13] The difference in the amount of parallelism and glossing in the two tales may be statistically significant for other purposes, but it is difficult to see how a reader could reasonably be expected to notice the difference. As Norman Blake indicates, it is unlikely that any contemporary reader of the "Melibee" sat down and did a close stylistic comparison with either Renaud, or, indeed, with the "Parson."[14] It is difficult to see how Chaucer's audience could determine whether Chaucer has really exaggerated in a

[12] I have examined both the "Parson's Tale" and the "Melibee" in the following edition: The Riverside Chaucer, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

[13] The reader is referred to the explanatory notes and table at the end of this Appendix.

[14] Norman Blake, The English Language in Medieval Literature (London: Methuen, 1979) 120-121.

style which is already, by our standards, extremely exaggerated.[15]

Calculations and notes for the "Tale of Melibee"

Collocations with the conjunctions "and" and "or" (Table 1) were selected because they represent the bulk of the examples contained in Bornstein's table of "doublets." Collocations of three words before and after the conjunction were selected because they tend to include only the simpler constructions while still allowing for constructions as complex as "preposition / adjective / noun / conjunction / preposition / adjective / noun," a fairly common construction in both tales. For example:

by leve and by conseil
of the wrong and of the wikkednesse

Glosses (Table 2) were selected as a second feature because they had been identified by various critics as examples of unnecessary prolixity.

Table 1

Tale	Total # of words	Total # of words in amplifications	% of total words
Melibee	16,925	2131	12.5
Parson	32,324	3467	10.7

Table 2

Tale	Total # of words	Total # of words in glosses	% of total words
Melibee	16,925	464	2.7
Parson	32,324	713	2.2

[15] Blake The English Language 120-122. It might be less anachronistic to refer to modern prose style as bare and unadorned.